COLLEGE
OAKLAND, CAL.

# TRISTAN AND ISOLT

## *OTHER PLAYS BY JOHN MASEFIELD*

THE FAITHFUL
MELLONEY HOLTSPUR; OR, THE PANGS OF LOVE
GOOD FRIDAY
A KING'S DAUGHTER
ESTHER. (*Adapted and partially translated from the French of Jean Racine*)
BERENICE. (*Adapted from the French of Jean Racine*)
THE TRIAL OF JESUS
THE TRAGEDY OF NAN

## *POETRY BY JOHN MASEFIELD*

COLLECTED POEMS
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REYNARD THE FOX
RIGHT ROYAL
A KING'S DAUGHTER: A TRAGEDY IN VERSE

## *OTHER WORKS BY JOHN MASEFIELD*

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ODTAA: A NOVEL
GALLIPOLI
ST. GEORGE AND THE DRAGON
THE OLD FRONT LINE
WITH THE LIVING VOICE: AN ADDRESS
RECENT PROSE

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COLLEGE

# TRISTAN AND ISOLT

*A Play in Verse*

BY

JOHN MASEFIELD

13890

THE MACMILLAN COMPANY

NEW YORK MCMXXVII

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WITHDRAWN

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First performed by the Lena Ashwell Players at the Century Theatre, Archer Street, Bayswater, at 8:15 P.M., on Monday, 21st February, 1927, with the following cast:

(*Characters in the order of their appearance.*)

| | |
|---|---|
| DESTINY | AGNES LAUCHLAN |
| TRISTAN, *a Pictish Prince* | JOHN LAURIE |
| DINAN, *His Steward* | OSWALD D. ROBERTS |
| KOLBEIN, *a Scandinavian Pirate* | HAROLD PAYTON |
| MARC, *King of Cornwall* | KYNASTON REEVES |
| KAI, *His Steward* | PATRICK GOVER |
| BEDWYR, *His Baily* | DONALD FINLAY |
| SOWKIN, *the Swineherd's Wife* | OLIVE WALTER |
| PIXNE, *betrothed to the Swineherd's Son* | RACHEL HILL |
| THURID, *Kolbein's Queen* | AGNES LAUCHLAN |
| ISOLT, *Her Daughter* | ESME CHURCH |
| BRANGWEN, *Her Waiting Gentlewoman* | LUCILLE LORNE |
| ARTHUR, *Captain of the Romano-British Host* | HAROLD PAYTON |
| HOG, *King Marc's Swineherd* | NORMAN CLARKE |
| PIGLING, *His Son* | THOROLD DICKINSON |
| ATTENDANTS | BETTY BEARDMORE<br>VICTORIA PARKER |

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# TRISTAN AND ISOLT

12890

# TRISTAN AND ISOLT

[*From Front Stage.*]

DESTINY

I am She who began ere Man was begotten,
I am deathless, unsleeping; my task is to make
Beginnings prosper to glory and crumble to rotten
By the deeds of women and men and the ways that they take.
I am apple and snake.

I show Tristan, the prince, in glory beginning,
And Isolt, the maid, in her beauty: I show these two
Passing from peace into bitter burning and sinning
From a love that was lighted of old. I display them anew
And the deaths that were due.

[*Full stage. Tintagel.*]

TRISTAN

You have brought me over the sea, far from our home,
To a castle percht on a crag at the world's end,
Yet never said why. Then here, in the castle, father,

Nobody speaks, but all go still as the grave,
As though they were under a curse. What is this castle?

DINAN

This is Tintagel, the court of the Cornish kings;
It *is* under a curse, for Kolbein, the pirate,
My enemy and yours, is a tyrant here.

TRISTAN

Why do you call him "my enemy and yours"?

DINAN

Tristan, my son, it is time that vou learned the truth.
Twenty years since, Meirchyon, King of Cornwali,
Lived here with Olwen, his daughter, and Marc, his son.
Kolbein the pirate killed King Meirchyon here,
Seized all Cornwall as his, seized Marc as a prize,
Would have seized Olwen as well, to serve his lust,
But that my master, King Tallorc, chancing to come here,
Saved her, by bearing her hence and marrying her.
Kolbein became our enemy thus, son Tristan.
He gave pursuit and killed King Tallorc, my master;
And the Queen, my mistress, died. After twenty years
I bring you here to a Cornwall under a curse:
Marc, a slave-King, Kolbein a tyrant still

Bleeding the groaning realm.
But stand aside; here Kolbein comes with King Marc:
We shall hear what new exaction the pirate claims.

[KOLBEIN *enters with* MARC.]

KOLBEIN

Marc, I ordered a tribute of thirty lads,
The sons of nobles: are they here to be paid?

MARC

No.

KOLBEIN

Then why not?

MARC

Because I beg you to spare them.
A tax, of the sons of nobles, is tyranny.

KOLBEIN

Being the tax I need, I bid you to pay it.

MARC

But to drag sons from their parents is barbarous.

KOLBEIN

To leave them to raise rebellion here is madness.

MARC

Boys cannot raise rebellion; but outraged men may.

KOLBEIN

I will deal with the boys now; with their fathers later.

MARC

Will you not take instead some double tribute
Of copper and tin, or linen, or grain, or beasts?

KOLBEIN

No.

MARC

Then a threefold tax?

KOLBEIN

Not a thousandfold.
I have things and beasts sufficient: I want young men.

MARC

Remember, you, that the gods befriend the friendless.

KOLBEIN

I have not found it so; your father was friendless,
So I clove his skull for him here in this very hall.
Your sister's husband was friendless; so I clove his skull;
And you are friendless and I will cleave your skull, too,
Spite of the gods, if you go running athwart.
Go, gather me here those thirty within five minutes.

[*He turns to go, growling.*]

You Cornish slaves must learn who is master here.

[*He goes out.*]

MARC

What are you, strangers? What brings you to Tintagel?

DINAN

I am a steward and harper, born in the north;
I come to speak with King Marc.

MARC

You have spoken with him:
Now take his advice and go from this land accurst.

DINAN

You do not remember me; but we met before.
I came here once with King Tallorc, the time he wooed
And wedded the fair princess, your sister, Olwen.

MARC

I was then nine. I forget you. Stay! are you Dinan?

DINAN

Yes, lord, I am.

MARC

Why, welcome, Dinan, to Cornwall,
Now I remember well: and is this your son?

DINAN

Only a foster-son, lord: loved as my own son.

TRISTAN

Am I not your son, then, father?

DINAN

No, Tristan, indeed.
This lad is of royal stock, King Marc; your stock.
He is the son of King Tallorc and your fair sister.

MARC

Mind what you say, friend.

TRISTAN

I, the son of King Tallorc?

MARC

They swore to me that my sister died in childbed,
With the child dead, too.

DINAN

I spread that story, my lord,
Lest Kolbein or Kolbein's men should murder him.
The Queen, your sister, died, but her son survived,
And this is he, Prince Tristan, named from King Tristan,
King Tallorc's father: he is your nephew, King Marc;
Is he not like your sister?

MARC

Yes; but by heaven . . .
This is a marvellous thing: proofs must be given.

DINAN

Here is Queen Olwen's ring: here is her brooch.
But on her death-bed she told me the rhyme unknown
To all but those of the blood of the House of Cornwall.
She said that that would convince.

[*He whispers to* MARC.]

MARC

It does convince me.
You are Olwen's son, my nephew; welcome, then, home.

DINAN

My prince and king, I have loved you for all these years
Only for this great day. I kneel to my King.

TRISTAN

That you shall never do.

MARC

No, never, indeed.
Dinan, most faithful steward and loving friend,
You shall kneel no more to kings: I create you lord
Of my southern march.
But, O good friends, I forgot . . .
You are in danger here, most deadly danger . . .
If Kolbein learns who you are, he will have you hanged . . .
If not, he may make you slaves. He is the pirate
Who killed your father and mine and governs Cornwall.

TRISTAN

I know about Kolbein, uncle.

MARC

I hear him coming.
Go aside; be silent; lest he enslave you, Tristan.

TRISTAN

I shall try not to be slave, being a King.

[KOLBEIN *enters.*]

KOLBEIN

Marc, your minutes are past; where are the thirty?

MARC

I have not gathered them, Kolbein.

KOLBEIN

You disobeyed.

Now I'll take sixty, with you for a sixty-first.
You shall pull at a bowman's oar aboard my galley.

[*He seizes* MARC.]

TRISTAN

One moment, Kolbein! Take those hands from the King.

KOLBEIN

God's sake, young cockerel, who are you that come crowing?

TRISTAN

You shall soon hear. You boasted, five minutes since,
That you killed King Meirchyon and his daughter's husband.
I am Tristan, son of that husband and that daughter.
You are my father's and my grandfather's killer;
You shall pay me for their blood. Come out and fight.

KOLBEIN

Tallorc's and Olwen's son! Why, they had no son.

DINAN

This is their son. I nurtured him secretly,
So that you should not kill him.

KOLBEIN

Dinan, the steward.

MARC

There are better proofs than that; he is my nephew.

KOLBEIN

I see he is: he is Olwen's son to the life.
Boy, Tristan, son; I loved your mother of old;
I killed your father for love of her. It is hard
To fight you, who are so like her.
Listen now, Tristan:
Let us not fight; but take your kingdom, and also
Ask what you please in settlement of our feud.

TRISTAN

I ask for a fair fight to a finish with you.

KOLBEIN

As you prefer. We will fight with swords, then, at once.
This, being a blood-feud, I will swear my followers
To abide by what may fall. See there in the bay
A rock with standing for two? That's where we'll fight.
We two will row there alone and fight to the utterance.
You agree, that that seems fair?

TRISTAN

Most manlike and fair.

DINAN

He is merciless to the beaten, fair to others.

KOLBEIN

So you will find me, Dinan, if I kill Tristan.
Marc, who says nothing, is doubtless thinking the more.
You will be happy with Kolbein killed and away?

MARC

No: I do not wish you killed.

KOLBEIN

No, you speak the truth.
Though I killed your father and took your land, you like me.
Well, the cockerel has not killed me yet; far from it.
I am still King. Come down the crag to the beach.
I have wisdom, you have youth: it is fair for each.

[*They go out.*]

BEDWYR [*entering*].

Kai, I have word that Arthur is coming to court
To ask for men for the war against the heathen.

KAI

It is not likely that Kolbein will grant the men.

BEDWYR

Not unless urged; but urge it, Kai. I shall urge it.

KAI

Urge it? That must depend upon Kolbein's will.
And Kolbein's will must depend upon events;

And events, good Bedwyr, depend on more than me.
But leave me Arthur's letter.

[BEDWYR *goes.*]

A good man, Bedwyr.
But narrow in view; no subtlety, no breadth.

[SOWKIN *enters.*]

What are you, good woman?

SOWKIN

Sowkin, Hog Swineherd's wife.

KAI

Why do you enter here?

SOWKIN

Bringing our duty,
Our Easter duty of March black-puddings, lord.
There, sir, a love of a pudding, as black as medicine,
And thick and soft as a lady's thigh: do feel it.
There's something to lean on in a day of trouble.
There's a lordly life, to eat one of these at supper,
And lie awake all night feeling it doing you good.

KAI

What vile beast's corpse did you desecrate for this?

SOWKIN

A love of a pig, lord, who felt like heaven itself.

KAI

Remove it into the garbage before it bursts.

SOWKIN

But it is for the King, sir; all blood and onions.

KAI

Go, bury it as I bid, and never again
Enter this hall. Your place is the gate or the sty.

[PIXNE *enters.*]

You, girl, what brings you here?

PIXNE

O Sir Kai, a stranger
Is going to fight King Kolbein there on the rock.

KAI

To fight King Kolbein? Quick, I must go: make way, girl!

[KAI *goes.*]

SOWKIN

What are they fighting for?

PIXNE

A blood-feud, the men said.
It is King Marc's nephew, they said. Oh, he is handsome!
He went just by me, with his eyes shining like stars.
Oh, I hope he will win.

SOWKIN

You, think of no strangers;
Think of my son, my Pigling, whom you're to marry.

PIXNE

So do I, Madam Sowkin; but this man is fighting

So that we shall be free, so the men were saying.
He may be all bleeding red. Oh, I wish we could hear!

SOWKIN

Here's somebody come: who is it?

PIXNE

The stranger's friend,
All white as a ghost.

[DINAN *enters.*]

DINAN

You Cornish women, be quick.
Fetch balsams; and run for water and make a bed.

PIXNE

Is the King's nephew wounded?

DINAN

Wounded to death.

SOWKIN

Run, Pixne, up to the spring; fetch water, quickly.

[PIXNE *goes.*]

If we bring this chair, it will serve. What happened, sir?

DINAN

My boy, whom I loved as a son.

SOWKIN

Did he fight the king?

DINAN

Yes, he fought Kolbein: much as a young red stag

Might fight with a mountain bull: he attacked and attacked,
But Kolbein stood and pushed him off with his shield.
Then the lad, tiring, rusht and struck on the helm
And Kolbein tottered as though he were hurt. Our hearts
Leapt when we saw him totter. A good blow more
Might have ended Kolbein then: but the boy was spent.
Then Kolbein laughed and strode to him and smote him
Grovelling to the rock. So, seeing him down,
I came to ready his death-bed.

SOWKIN

We'll help the lad.
You fly to a safety, sir, before Kolbein comes.

DINAN

No, I will stay with my lad. Listen. They're coming,
Bearing him up the steps cut in the cliff.

TRISTAN

Take care.

DINAN

Come, madam, help me.

[TRISTAN *enters.*]

TRISTAN

I am only bruised, not hurt.
Help him into the chair; bring water and wine.
[KOLBEIN *is helped in.*]

KOLBEIN

That is the last time Kolbein will climb that stairway.
Dinan, why do you gape? You thought I had killed him?
I had, too: only I slipped: it was too great odds.
Wisdom against man's youth, for youth has the luck.
I slipped as I went to end him: he ended me.
[*He drinks.*]
Listen, you, Marc.
I have made your fiefs and mine one Kingdom only.
Let that be kept. I have a daughter in Ireland . . .
Isolt, her name is. Marc, you must marry Isolt . . .
My Irish fief shall be yours, then; Cornwall, too,
Will you marry Isolt?

MARC

If she will have me.

KOLBEIN

Swear.

MARC

I swear to marry your daughter, if she consent.

KOLBEIN

If she refuse, may my dying curses blast her.
Now, Tristan, you. Hearken the rest.
When I am dead, carry my body to Ireland,
Tell my Queen Thurid and Isolt to take you to friendship.
The blood-feud is to end, on pain of my curse.
Bring Isolt back to Tintagel to marry Marc.
Swear you will do this.

TRISTAN

I swear I will do your will.

KOLBEIN

When you have borne my corpse home,
Bid my men bury me in my ship on the beach,
So that in gales the shingle will screech above me.
Now I'll die standing up.
[*He stands.*]
I am Kolbein, you dead, Kolbein Blood-axe, the King!
[*He falls.*]

MARC

He is dead, King Kolbein.

DINAN

Justice is done on him now.

TRISTAN

Cover his face.

KAI

All hail, King Marc of Cornwall!

BEDWYR

All hail, Prince Tristan, setter free of the land!

TRISTAN

King Marc, may this body be decked and carried to ship?
Then I will sail at once for the Princess Isolt.

MARC

Shroud him and strew him, you women. Follow me, men.

[*He goes out with the* MEN.]

SOWKIN

With a proud forefoot this ship rose to the sea,
But under all seas and ships are the dooms waiting.

CURTAIN

[*Half minute's interval.*]

[*Full stage. Coisnafon.*]

QUEEN THURID. ISOLT. BRANGWEN. TRISTAN.

TRISTAN

I come as a herald from Cornwall. I say that Kolbein
Is dead of a wound I dealt him in fight.

QUEEN

What madness
Brings you to tell the news to his widow and child?

TRISTAN

My oath to the dead. I add: it is Kolbein's will
That you take me to your friendship, ending the feud.

QUEEN

Kolbein's will, do you say? What is my will, think you?
Mine, whom you widowed?

TRISTAN

Heralds are sacred to men.

QUEEN

To men, maybe, not to women: you shall learn, herald,
What kind of friendship the widow of Kolbein grants.

TRISTAN

Call up your people, have me flung to the wolf-hounds.

QUEEN

This kind of friendship I grant: my heart's best thanks.
You have freed me from the beast who murdered my lover.
My girl's best thanks: you have freed her from the threat
Of the lust of his pirate friend.
We take you to friendship;
There shall be no feud between us, Tristan the Prince.

ISOLT

As my mother says, we are slaves set free: we bless you.

TRISTAN

I thank you both.
I am charged by King Marc of Cornwall
(Under Kolbein's will) to offer this fair princess
His hand and crown.

QUEEN

It is nobly offered of Marc.

TRISTAN

While you debate the offer, it is my office
To bury Kolbein; will you attend his burial?

QUEEN

I have longed for his burial more than twenty years.

ISOLT

He killed my father the day before I was born,
It was that that made me his daughter. Bury him deep.

TRISTAN

He killed my father also, before I was born.
He shall be buried deep.

[*He goes out.*]

QUEEN

Here is the granting of twenty years of prayer,
Kolbein is dead; you are set free, with the offer
To be queen to King Marc of Cornwall, also set free:

He, too, was a slave to Kolbein; he is young, just, gentle.
What do you think of the suit?

ISOLT

You are foretelling . . .
What do you think?

QUEEN

I think he is worthy of you.

ISOLT

Worthy, yes; but what will the end of it be?

QUEEN

That which you make.

ISOLT

Only a part can be made . . .
Something tells me that there is no quiet for women
Who come as foreigner queens into stranger courts.

QUEEN

No fate is to be dreaded, but borne, or changed.

ISOLT

Mother, what will my fate be?

QUEEN

A strange and a royal.

ISOLT

Happy?

QUEEN

Much mixed with love out of the ages.

ISOLT

There is no avoiding fate, going or staying.
And to go is royal and liker a queen than to stay.
So I will go to this Marc.

[TRISTAN *enters.*]

QUEEN

Is the dead man buried?

TRISTAN

His men have laid him in howe: I have scattered earth.

QUEEN

The winter then being gone, let the spring begin.

ISOLT

Prince, I accept Marc's offer of hand and crown.

TRISTAN

In my uncle's name, I thank you for this great grace.

ISOLT

And to you, who have brought the grace, I offer thanks.

QUEEN

How soon will you rob me of my daughter, O Prince?

TRISTAN

Now, if she will; the wind is fair, the ship ready.

ISOLT

It shall be now.

[*She goes out.*]

TRISTAN

I will order the ship brought near.

[*He goes out.*]

QUEEN

The day that Isolt was born, the spae-wife told me
That I had borne one knitted to tragical love.
What can love and knowledge avail, with Destiny?

[*She fetches a casket.*]

Is Brangwen there?

[BRANGWEN *enters.*]

Brangwen, you follow the princess into Cornwall.
Swear that upon her marriage day you will make
Occasion for Marc and Isolt to drink this.
It is a love-drink; those who drink it together
Are bound in a lasting love. See that they drink it.

BRANGWEN

I swear: they shall drink this wine on their marriage night.

QUEEN

Thank you, good Brangwen. I leave the flasket with you.

[*The* QUEEN *goes out.*]

BRANGWEN

Would I might drink it in love, that a King might love me!

[TRISTAN *enters.*]

TRISTAN

The ship is ready below; will you tell the princess?

BRANGWEN

I will go tell her at once.

[BRANGWEN *goes out.*]

TRISTAN

When I have landed her, I must leave Tintagel;
I dare not stay for her wedding, nor see her again.
I cannot look on her face without loving her.

[ISOLT *enters.*]

ISOLT

Since we sail at once, how soon shall we reach Tintagel?

TRISTAN

Sunset to-morrow.

ISOLT

It is a leap into darkness.

TRISTAN

But you bring light.

ISOLT

Shall I see you often in Cornwall?

TRISTAN

No, lady; never.

ISOLT

Never? Why not?

TRISTAN

Because I go to my Kingdom.

ISOLT

You mean that we may not meet, after to-morrow?

[TRISTAN *nods.*]

Not even there at my wedding?

TRISTAN

I shall wish you joy.

ISOLT

Stay till then, prince, that at least one friendly face
May shine among all those haters of foreign queens.

TRISTAN

No one who looks on you will ever hate you,
Save from jealousy or envy; but after to-morrow
I shall not see you. I shall not forget you, though.

ISOLT

Nor I you, Tristan, because you have altered my life.

TRISTAN

And you mine, Isolt, as I thank God. But come now
To the ship that strains to be gone, and the life beginning.

ISOLT

Look, here is wine: will you drink to the life beginning?

TRISTAN

With all my heart, but I see no wine-cup nor horn.

ISOLT

There in the niche on the stair is a cup of crystal.

TRISTAN

It is broken to pieces, see . . .

ISOLT

It was Kolbein's cup,
He called it his Luck: it is broken like Kolbein's self.
What can we drink from?

TRISTAN

The wine is fragrant as June.

[DINAN *enters.*]

DINAN

I bring a gift for the princess Isolt, a shell
Drawn up but now in the bay with the anchor flukes.
We say that the sea-brought things bring fortune, lady,
So we cleansed it: it is strange: may it bring you fortune.

ISOLT

I thank you for gift and wish: strange things drift hither.

DINAN

Princess, your gear is aboard and the ship is ready.

TRISTAN

We will come aboard in a few short moments, then.

[DINAN *goes.*]

ISOLT

Here is the fortunate cup brought by the sea.
I drink to your fortune, prince. Will you drink to mine?

TRISTAN

To your fortune, Isolt, princess: be it ever happy.
O golden beauty, I love you so that I die.
If you cannot speak some solace, I am but dead.

ISOLT

I cannot speak a solace, being so swayed;
But you are my one thought, you are my life, my love;
I care not what may happen so I have you.

[*They embrace.*]

TRISTAN

To-night at sea we shall be each other's, beloved.

[TRISTAN *goes out.*]

ISOLT

I am sworn to Marc . . . what matter? Though the world end
I have drunken a queen's fortune, O love, O love!

[BRANGWEN *enters.*]

BRANGWEN

Lady, the Queen your mother and all the house
Are there at the ship to see you sail.

ISOLT

I come, then.

BRANGWEN

O lady, my mistress, you have drunk of the wine.
It is magical wine, and I know not what may come.

ISOLT

Can it matter what may come? I have been in heaven;
The joy of its beauty is over me like great flames.

CURTAIN

[*Half minute's interval.*]

[*Full stage. Tintagel.*]

ARTHUR

Now that the wedding is over, I must be gone.
King Marc has a lovely bride.

KAI

The wedding went well,
Save for young Tristan: a most rude, wild young man;
He thrust Queen Isolt ashore and would not stay
Even to wish his uncle joy. What could he mean?

ARTHUR

He needed the wind and tide. Now I'm for the war.
King Marc is sending me men: farewell, good Kai.

KAI

Farewell, Lord Arthur.

[ARTHUR *goes.*]

A good man, but no depth.
Why should this Tristan fly like that from the wedding?
He has offered Queen Isolt love and been rebuffed.
I know young men: it is that: she has boxed his ears.

[TRISTAN *enters.*]

TRISTAN

Where is Queen Isolt? I wish to speak with Queen Isolt.

KAI

Her Majesty has gone to the bridal chamber.

TRISTAN

The King's not there?

KAI

His Majesty is in council,
Deeply concerned that you were not at his wedding.

TRISTAN

I cannot help his concern. Where is the bride-room?

KAI

You cannot go to the Queen of Cornwall's room.

TRISTAN

Where is it? I wish to see her.

KAI

My prince, consider:
She is unrobing now, on her marriage night.

[ISOLT *enters.*]

ISOLT

Good Steward, Sir Kai, will you find Sir Constans for me?
Prince Tristan, we thought you had fled. Welcome to Cornwall.

KAI

I will find Sir Constans as Your Majesty bids.

ISOLT

I thank you.

[KAI *goes.*]

Why did you fly before our wedding?

TRISTAN

Fly, O Isolt, beloved!

ISOLT

O Tristan, hush!

KAI [*re-entering*].

May I bring commands to Sir Constans?

ISOLT

We wish to see him.

KAI

Your Majesty will pardon my asking more . . .
Is it your pleasure that he attend you here?

ISOLT

No; at the robing-room.

KAI [*going again*].

Madam, he shall attend.
Isolt, my darling, this marriage must not be.
Whatever we swore or promised to Kolbein or Marc,
Is burnt all blank by our love. Why are you shrinking?
Kai's gone.

ISOLT

But he suspects; he is peering and prying.
No: he is coming back. Stand further away.

KAI

Pardon my troubling, but at which robing-room
Shall he attend?

ISOLT

The robing-room of the Queen.

KAI

At the Queen's. I thank Your Grace.

TRISTAN

Will you now leave us?

KAI

Pardon, Prince Tristan, the Queen's will must be done.

ISOLT

The Queen thanks you, Sir Kai, for zealous service.

KAI

I thank the Queen: may she never lack loyal servants.

[KAI *goes.*]

ISOLT

You see that he suspects.

TRISTAN

We are done with suspicion . . .
What they suspect or know is naught to the truth.
We are each other's, and this pretence that we tried—
That you could keep to your promise and I to my oath—
Is nothing, nothing, but false; it is false as hell.
And I am here. Look, darling, you know as I do
That we are each other's. You are mine, mine only.

ISOLT

Marc will be here, Kai said: somebody said . . .
Look at the door.

TRISTAN

There is no one there.

ISOLT

Not yet.
But I am Marc's wife, with a ring; in a few moments
I have to go to his bed.

TRISTAN

That you never shall!

ISOLT

He has talked of it all day long; he is greedy for me.

TRISTAN

Greedy? That scholar? Kolbein's slave? Take the ring off.
Look . . . we must get from this, back to my ship.

ISOLT

Where is your ship? In the harbour below?

TRISTAN

No, Isolt.
The harbour below is barred, with a chain across it.
My ship could not get in: she is there . . . to the south.

ISOLT

How did you get here then? Through the gates?

TRISTAN

I climbed.
From the sea, and over the walls, for the gates were locked.

ISOLT

But the crag is rotten with wrack, and a slip means death.

TRISTAN

It was to get to you. I have left a rope there;
I could lower you down.

ISOLT

I could not: it is too giddy,
To swing down there . . . I have seen that terrible crag.

TRISTAN

I would make you safe, with a knot.

ISOLT

It is beyond me.

TRISTAN

You are the Queen . . . order the gates to be opened.

ISOLT

Kai holds the keys: he would suspect, if I asked.

TRISTAN

He dare not suspect the Queen.

ISOLT

Even if I asked,
Even if I had the keys, if we climbed the stairway
Down to the beach, Marc or his knights would come, too.
We could never reach your ship.

TRISTAN

Then I'll go to Marc,
Tell him our love and force him to fight for you.

ISOLT

No, for God's sake do not, Tristan; his men would kill you.

TRISTAN

What else can I do? We are knotted into the nets.

ISOLT

Brangwen has gone.

TRISTAN

Gone where?

ISOLT

For my mother's love-drink.
Marc and I are to drink it together in bed,
So that we love each other . . . O Tristan, I cannot!

TRISTAN

I'll tear him in pieces rather!

ISOLT

O quiet! quiet!
Somebody comes . . .

[*Enter* MARC, KAI, BEDWYR.]

MARC

We have missed you, nephew, to-day, at our wedding feast.
Why were you absent?

TRISTAN

I chose it.

MARC

How do you come now?
Your ship was not in the port when the chain was drawn,
Nor were you yourself in the castle when gates were locked.
Kai thinks that you scaled the crag.

TRISTAN

I scaled it; what then?

MARC

Then this is your rope that you left upon the wall?

TRISTAN

It is my rope.

MARC

You need not have run such dangers,
Gates would have opened for you, my sister's son,
You are my heir, remember.

KAI

At present, my lord.

MARC

But I need you, nephew. . . . And why did you not bring Dinan?
I need him, too. I cannot let this day pass
Without a sign of the love I bear to you both.
I have a gift for you: come.

[*He leads* TRISTAN *off.*]

KAI

Sir Constans attends in the robing-tower, madam.

ISOLT

I thank you. I shall not need him.

KAI

He shall be told so.

ISOLT

Sir Kai, you were charming in all your welcome to me.

KAI

You are gracious, madam.

ISOLT

Sir Kai, might a new-crowned Queen
Ride for one short half-hour into the moonlight?
I long to be quiet after the feast's tumult.

KAI

Take horse and ride alone?

ISOLT

Friends might come with me.

KAI

I will ask King Marc, who will doubtless gladly ride,
Though the horse-boys are off duty till to-morrow.
To ride in the moonlight doubtless would be quieting.

[KAI *goes.*]

ISOLT

He knows, that pryer and scraper; and Marc must suspect. . . .
If we get horse, we will gallop: but shall we get horse?

[BRANGWEN *enters.*]

BRANGWEN

The cup of magical love-drink is made ready,
The bridal-chamber is deckt. King Marc has sent me
To bid you come to disrobe.

ISOLT

I have sent to the King.
Saying that I entreat a half-hour's quiet,
Riding into the moonlight.

BRANGWEN

Was it Sir Kai
That you trusted with the message?

ISOLT

Yes, it was Kai.

BRANGWEN

I heard him say to Sir Bedwyr there at the door,
Even as I passed, that he would not bring such a message.
They laughed and agreed.

ISOLT

Where is Prince Tristan, Brangwen?

BRANGWEN

But, my mistress, he sailed this morning, leaving us here.

ISOLT

He was here a moment ago. Where did he go?
Has King Marc put him in prison?

BRANGWEN

I know not, madam.
He is not now with the King, for the King sent me
To say he awaited you.

ISOLT

I must see Prince Tristan;
Must know where he is; must plan with him what to do.

BRANGWEN

Madam, I hoped that all that folly was over.

ISOLT

Over! my God!

BRANGWEN

But you have married the King;
Who loves you, madam, and now is expecting you.

ISOLT

Go back to him and say I am suddenly ill.

BRANGWEN

That he will know to be false.

ISOLT

I am so ill, Brangwen,
That to touch that creature will kill me.

BRANGWEN

O madam, no!
He is a good, just King, handsome and noble;
Trust to his love, Queen Isolt, and give him yours.
That was your promise and oath, and your mother's wish
As well as his own great longing. You shrink at first,
But a husband is God's gift as a help to women.
Besides, the magical wine will make you love him.

ISOLT

I have pledged Tristan in that: no wine, no magic,
No wonder more in the world can alter my love:
I am Tristan's queen, to the depths.

BRANGWEN

O madam, hush!

[*Enter* KAI *and* BEDWYR.]

KAI

Madam, I grieve to intrude. I come from the King

To ask that, graciously, you forbear your riding
Until to-morrow, an hour and day more fitting.

ISOLT

Say I am fevered, Sir Kai, and long to be out.

KAI

Madam, I said so. The King replied as I say.

BEDWYR

He added, madam, that we might crave your consent
To light you hence to the King, who is much concerned
To hear of your fever and longs to comfort you.

ISOLT

I am not ready to go. Where is Prince Tristan?

KAI

Gone to his rest.

ISOLT

What, killed?

KAI

No, to bed, madam,
In the castle's landward wing.

BEDWYR

May we return?
To light you hence, in a moment?

ISOLT

Give me two moments.

KAI

Thank you, Queen Isolt.

BEDWYR

We humbly thank you and go.

ISOLT

See, I am jailed by this Marc; watched, wardered, turnkeyed.
Would I were like the wolf that, trapped by both feet,
Gnaws them both off and hobbles away alive.
Girl, there's some cranny or attic where I can hide?

BRANGWEN

They would soon find you.

ISOLT

But there is the coil of rope;
I will tie that to the wall and let myself down.

BRANGWEN

The sentries are on the wall now, going their rounds.
You would be stopped on the way! O beautiful mistress,
Your queenly destiny calls, accept it queenly.

ISOLT

I cannot be queen to Marc.

BRANGWEN

But you are his queen.

ISOLT

Only by word, never in heart.

BRANGWEN

Word suffices.
He has rights upon you: right to use force . . .

ISOLT

I, too,
Have a little force, and a little knife, my Brangwen.

BRANGWEN

Queen, if you threaten yourself, I will cry for help.
[TRISTAN *enters.*]

ISOLT

O Tristan, save me, lest I be dragged to the King!
Where have you been?

TRISTAN

With the King . . . and seeking a way.

ISOLT

Can we escape?

TRISTAN

Not now, nor to-morrow, maybe.

ISOLT

You mean I must go to the King?

TRISTAN

That, or I kill him.

ISOLT

O Brangwen, save me! I cannot face it, I cannot.

BRANGWEN

My queen, take courage.

ISOLT

I will not go to him: no.
Girl, it is dark; for this night, only this night,
Go to the King in my place.

BRANGWEN

O my mistress, Isolt,
Never speak such things!

ISOLT

Only to pledge him the wine . . .
He will not see, will not know; will you do it, girl?

BRANGWEN

O hush, madam, hush! the very thought is such shame.

ISOLT

I saved you, body and soul, when you were a girl.

BRANGWEN

You stopped my being a slave, and I thank you and bless you,
And pray God bless you, for that; but this is a sin.

ISOLT

It's a service you shall perform when your princess bids.
Go, or I'll kill you.

TRISTAN

See, good Brangwen, we two
Are taken in nets; will you do this thing to save us?

BRANGWEN

I should be known, and whipped by the guards and spat at.

TRISTAN

No, girl, I promise not. I am asked by the King
To serve the love-drink there in the marriage-bed.

I have seen that the room is dark: I will make it darker
With but one taper, and that away from the bed.
You will be in the bed before him in almost darkness,
And stay till you drink the love-drink: that's all we ask.

BRANGWEN

All! He will know that I am not the Queen.

TRISTAN

How can he?

BRANGWEN

He will want more from me than the loving-cup.

ISOLT

If we drug the wine with this, he will fall asleep.

BRANGWEN

You will not bid me do this terrible thing!

ISOLT

As soon as he is asleep, you may steal away.

BRANGWEN

Where shall I steal to, Queen, to hide and be cleansed?

TRISTAN

Here, to our loves and our gratitude, good Brangwen.

BRANGWEN

Suppose this drug that you give should kill the King?

TRISTAN

Girl, till your mistress had this thought, I had planned
To kill the King as he came to the marriage-bed.
That I will still do, if you do not consent,
And you, too, knowing so much.

BRANGWEN

No, do not threaten me, sir.
I will do this for my mistress, to whom I swore.

ISOLT

Brangwen, the gods reward you.

TRISTAN

We will reward you.

BRANGWEN

But, hark! here the Knights are coming: it is too late.

[*Enter* KAI *and* BEDWYR.]

ISOLT

Sweet Knights, I am grateful for your loving care.
I will not trouble you now to light me hence.

KAI

Queen, the King charges us that we bring you to him.

ISOLT

Kai, the Queen charges you that you tell the King.
That she, on her marriage-night, will now put off
All ceremony and claim; she is now going
To prepare herself for bed. Good-night, Prince Tristan.

Good-night, Sir Kai and Sir Bedwyr. Come, Brangwen, come.

[*She and* BRANGWEN *go.*]

KAI

Good-night, Queen Isolt.

BEDWYR

Good-night.

MARC

Is Prince Tristan there?

[MARC *enters.*]

TRISTAN

Yes, here.

MARC

And the Queen?

KAI

Just gone to her robing-room.

MARC

Is her maid Brangwen with her? Call her back, will you?

[KAI *goes.*]

Come, Bedwyr, go to your bed, you are bed-weary.

BEDWYR

I thank Your Grace: may to-night be a blessed night
To you and to Cornwall, King.

[*He goes out.*]

MARC

I thank you, Bedwyr.

KAI [*returning*].

The girl will be here at once.

MARC

Thank you, good Kai;

Now you, to your rest.

KAI [*kneeling*].

I pray good-night to my King,
And joy, with a loving Queen, who will bring an heir,
May never a traitor come 'twixt you and the Queen.

MARC

Amen to that.

KAI

Will Prince Tristan say Amen?

TRISTAN

I was praying, Sir Kai; I did not hear your prayer.

KAI

I will say good-night.

MARC

Good-night, good steward.

TRISTAN

Good-night.

[KAI *goes.* BRANGWEN *enters.*]

MARC

A good, true servant, Sir Kai. I sent for you, girl,
To give you this jewel of gold. As my Queen's servant
May your life in this court be happy.

BRANGWEN

I thank Your Majesty.

[BRANGWEN *goes.*]

MARC

Marriage is solemn, nephew.
I have been in the vaults where all our House is buried,
Each in his bed of stone with his mask of gold.
My father and his and his, eleven dead Kings,
Each felt as I feel now, and all are still here;
For a House is a tree of souls; some, roots in the earth;
Some, leaves in the air . . . all one.
Lad, you must soon marry.
Isolt and I will think of a wife for you.

TRISTAN

I am not thinking of marriage this yet awhile.

MARC

It is man's happiest state. Will you follow Brangwen?
And bring me word if the Queen has retired to bed?

[TRISTAN *goes.*]

Invisible spirits of all my ancestors
Who watch o'er the House ye made, help me to fortune.
O unseen helpers, who once were my forefathers,
Help, that the tragical fate which wrecked my boyhood,
May never return.

[TRISTAN *enters.*]

TRISTAN

Sir, Brangwen tells me that the Queen has retired;
She has darkened the bedroom for you.

MARC

Let us go then.
I have not angered nor vext you?

TRISTAN

Never, sir. Why?

MARC

You fled my wedding, and then you have wished
me no luck.

TRISTAN

I fled your wedding, indeed; being no courtier.
As for my wishes, I wish more than I can say.

MARC

I am glad that it is not anger, my sister's son.
Bring us the love-drink soon as I strike on the
floor.
I will strike thus.

[*They go upstairs.*]
[ISOLT *enters.*]

ISOLT

This is the love-drink. Brangwen is in his bed,
Waiting his coming. What if he see through the
cheat?
Or if she betray it? A whisper, a gesture's
enough.

He's in his room there, undressing; this bridegroom and beast . . .
Not for me, thank God, not for me.

TRISTAN

Queen Isolt . . . Isolt.

ISOLT

Hush, Tristan; not so loud.

TRISTAN

The girl is in bed.
It is dark, but I'll leave it darker.

ISOLT

But oh, if she cry!

TRISTAN

She dare not utter a sound, even if he urge her.
Where is your sleepy drug to mix with the wine?

ISOLT

I have not mixed it already, because . . . ah! hark.

TRISTAN

It is the King.

[MARC *appears above.*]

MARC

I am ready now for the love-drink.
Is that the girl?

TRISTAN

It is. I will bring the wine.

[MARC *goes.*]

ISOLT

My mother asked that the bride and her groom should drink

This wine, on their marriage night. Pledge your love, husband.

TRISTAN

To our love, sweet wife, wherever it lead.

[*He drinks.*]

ISOLT

To our love.
Sweet husband, with all my worship, now and for ever.

[*She drinks, they embrace.* MARC *strikes the floor.*]

TRISTAN

O my love, what was it struck then? That knocking sounded
Like laughter from outside life. All this trick with the girl
Does but delay our trouble, you are still his.

ISOLT

I will be yours on my marriage night, my Tristan.
Here is the sleepy drug, for Marc shall sleep sound.
When he wakes, I must be at his side; until then, yours.

[TRISTAN *takes the drink upstairs.*]

ISOLT

He will kill them, if they discover!
Yesterday morning
I had not seen him, and now he is all my world.
He must be serving them now.

[*A clatter above.*]

O God, what was that?
Has he killed them? What was it that clattered? Who's there?
What if Kai knew it and killed him? Where is he now?
Why does he not come, or give signal?

[TRISTAN *descends.*]

Is that you, Tristan?
What happened?

TRISTAN

Listen, love, listen.

ISOLT

All's silent.

TRISTAN

Quiet, still: do not you breathe. No; he's drugged: it is safe.

ISOLT

Why are you shaking so? Did he discover her?

TRISTAN

No;
But she was so shaking, she scarcely could drink: having drunk,
She dropped the gold cup on the floor.
I picked up the cup, but the wine was all spilled. What he drank
Was the bitter brown ooze from the drug: it has sent him to sleep.

ISOLT

Marc will not love her, then, but she will love him.

TRISTAN

It is a grim night for the girl: she was proud.
She shuddered.

ISOLT

To-morrow will be grim for us: we may shudder.

TRISTAN

Would God
To-morrow might never dawn.

ISOLT

It may never dawn.
The world may end. Listen. The lovers are quiet.
Now, for to-night, we have each other, beloved.
Will you not take me, Tristan?

CURTAIN

[*Three minutes' interval.*]

[*Same Scene.*]

KAI

You fellow, what are you doing here? Who are you?

HOG

Hog, the King's swineherd, sir, that the King sent for,
About the killing of hogs.

KAI

I am the steward.
I will consider what hogs shall be killed, if any.
Be off now, where you belong.

HOG

May I speak to the King?

KAI

To the King? No, certainly not. Get out!

[HOG *goes aside.* BEDWYR *enters.*]

Ah, Bedwyr, welcome.
The King will not believe that Tristan's her lover.
I gave him proofs, but he loves the Queen too well.

[TRISTAN *appears above.*]

Still, I made him promise to set a trap for Tristan.
The Queen has gone to stay at her summer manor;
The King has given out that to-day he will start
For a long week's summer-hunting out on the moor.
That is the trap: and Tristan has fallen into it.
He has told Marc that he feels too ill to come hunting,
He has sent Dinan to beg the Queen to return.
The Queen will return to-night: Tristan will court her:
Marc and we shall return, and catch them, and end them.

[ARTHUR *enters.*]

BEDWYR

This is your plot, Kai. What does Arthur think about it?

ARTHUR

I take no hand in't. It is no quarrel of ours,
It lies between Marc and Tristan.

Besides, these quarrels
Must be patched up; we need our strength for the war.

[*He goes out.* MARC *enters.*]

MARC

We'll ride to this hunting, then. You, Bedwyr and Kai,
It will be ill for you if to-night's trap fail.
Swineherd, what is it?

KAI

I settled his business, lord.

MARC

I see my swineherds myself. What news from the sties?

HOG

O my lord King, fine news:—
Farrowing came like the lily and went like the rose,
Beautiful; ten to the sow; and to-morrow's the year.

MARC

Ah, yes, I promised that if you could keep swine a year,
Not losing one from a wolf or a robber, I'd grant you
Freedom to you and to yours: so I will; have you lost none?

HOG

Not yet, lord; no.

MARC

Have you hope of your freedom, then?

HOG

No, lord, none: that would be heathen, to hope.
I feel inside like a pan of eels being boiled,
But never let it be thought I dared to hope.

MARC

Who keeps your sties while you're here?

HOG

My wife and son, sir.

MARC

Then to-night will be anxious watching for you three souls.
Well, come to me here to-morrow; if none has been lost
By then, you shall all be free, with something beside.

HOG

Thank you, my King.

MARC

And, Kai, remember, my swineherds
Report directly to me, when their duty calls.

KAI

Certainly, lord.

MARC

Bedwyr, come; we must ride.

[*He leads* BEDWYR *off.*]

KAI [*to* HOG]

Never you dare presume to come here again.

Whatever the King may say, you report to me,
Or I'll give you cause to repent.

[KAI *goes.*]
[TRISTAN *comes down as* HOG *moves away.*]

TRISTAN

The trap has caught us unless I can warn the Queen.
What messenger can I send to stop her returning?
I have told them that I am ill; so I cannot go.
I dare not trust Marc's courtiers.
Perhaps this swineherd.
O swineherd!

HOG

Sir.

TRISTAN

Will you take a word to the Queen,
There in the forest, not to return to-night?

HOG

That's a long way. I couldn't be back by midnight.

TRISTAN

You shall have my horse.

HOG

No, lord, no horse for me.
Better not show it was you who sent the message.
But going on foot takes time,
And I must be guarding the swine to-night, my lord.

TRISTAN

No one will rob the sties.

HOG

Yes, many might rob them.
The slaves might do it to spite me. Sir Kai might do it
So as to keep me a slave; and if I'm away,
There's only my wife and son, to watch.

TRISTAN

I'll guard your sties to-night, if you'll take the message.

HOG

You, lord?

TRISTAN

Why not? Will you go, then?

HOG

Yes, lord, I will.
I tell the Queen she's not to return to-night?

TRISTAN

Not to return to-night, whatever happens.

HOG

I will not fail you, my lord.
But you'll bear in mind
It's a deal to us to have freedom near . . .

TRISTAN

I swear
I will guard your sties to the death. If I lose a hog,

I pledge my crown that I will buy you your freedom.
Now go, and for God's sake do not fail.

HOG

Trust me, lord.

[HOG *goes.*]

TRISTAN

Will he be there in time? Will he miss the Queen?
Marc goes a-hunting, does he? The quarry is warned.

CURTAIN

[*The front stage.*]

ARTHUR

Have you not hunted, Bedwyr?

BEDWYR

Marc bade us return;
But he, meanwhile, has ridden to join the Queen.
The trap that was planned is not to be set.

ARTHUR

I am glad that he scorned this trap: it was unworthy.

KAI

It is not unworthy to watch over Cornwall's peace;
And I tell you, Arthur, what I have since discovered.
Tristan had word of the plot: someone betrayed it.

He has sent that swineherd to tell the Queen not to come.

BEDWYR

No, truly?

KAI

He has. And now, in the swineherd's absence,
Tristan, this King's son, Cornwall's nephew, our saviour,
Has gone to the sties and taken the swineherd's place.
He, the Queen's lover, is guarding pigs, while the herd,
Who is the King's servant, goes warning the Queen.

ARTHUR

It is true he is guarding the sties, for I saw him there.

KAI

Now let us teach both him and the swineherd a lesson.
Let us take his swine from under his nose to-night,
Ruin this swineherd's prospects of liberty
Which he plainly cannot deserve, and make this Tristan
Such a laughing-stock as will force him out of Cornwall.

BEDWYR

Raiding the swineyard would be a pleasant frolic.
I will make one.

KAI

And Arthur?

ARTHUR

This is no frolic.
Tristan is dangerous with a spear in his hand.

KAI

Dangerous? Grown men's wits are sharper than spears.

BEDWYR

How do you plan to outwit him?

KAI

I, in disguise
As an old, old man, will wheedle him from the sties;
Then you and Arthur shall carry away a hog.

BEDWYR

And suppose you fail?

KAI

I imitate old, old men
So that I cannot fail.

ARTHUR

No, Kai will not fail.
But Tristan may not be wheedled.

KAI

Then Bedwyr may try.

ARTHUR

What will you do, Bedwyr, to outwit Tristan?

BEDWYR

I will go to Tristan and say, "I'm the swineherd's brother,

Come to relieve your guard." I will take his place;
And when I have taken his place, you may take the swine.

ARTHUR

Tristan may be less trusting than you suppose.

BEDWYR

I imitate country-folk to the very life.

KAI

That is true: he imitates country-people well.

BEDWYR

What will you do, Arthur, if Kai and myself should fail?

ARTHUR

In that unlikely chance, I should say "Attach,"
Make an assault together. Three against one
Should make us masters at least of a virgin sow.

KAI

We might try that, if the other attempts should fail.
But they will not fail.

ARTHUR

I do not think that they will.
Wait. If the night-guard hear us thieves at the pigsties
And come to the rescue and capture us red-handed,
We may be hanged at the nearest tree.

KAI

What nonsense!

The guard will know the King's steward, and the King's baily,
And the Captain of the Host. We will start from here, then,
An hour before first cockcrow?

ARTHUR

Agreed.

BEDWYR

So be it.

KAI

Since we rise so early, Bedwyr, we'll get to bed.

[KAI *and* BEDWYR *go out.*]

ARTHUR

Deliver us from old men who are old women!
And here is Tristan.

[TRISTAN *enters.*]

And why in such hurry, my Prince?

TRISTAN

I'm guarding the sties to-night, and I need a knife—
A broad sharp knife for a stab, instead of a spear.

ARTHUR

Take mine, my Prince; so you work for the swineherd's freedom.

TRISTAN

Yes, I take part. Will you come, too?

ARTHUR

No, I cannot.

TRISTAN

Why not? Do come.

ARTHUR

Do you think that you need my help?

TRISTAN

One never knows in these moonless nights of the spring.

ARTHUR

True: but to-night I have work to do with some friends.
Are you going back to your kingdom soon?

TRISTAN

Not soon.

ARTHUR

Your father was on my staff in the Pentland war.
I stayed with him there: you inherit a goodly realm.

TRISTAN

It is a fair land.

ARTHUR

Why not go to it, Tristan?

TRISTAN

Men can only play one game at a time, Lord Arthur.

ARTHUR

Only one dangerous game.
But you must to sty . . .
"Look out before cockcrow" was your father's proverb.

I'll see that the night guard march that way.
Good-night.

[ARTHUR *goes.*]

TRISTAN

Something is plotted against me: that was a hint.
I will "look out before cockcrow": I do not fear them.

[*He goes off.*]

[*Half a minute's interval.*]

[*Full stage.*]

*The swineyard on the left of the stage, of wattled hurdles.*

TRISTAN

She got the message, thank heaven; I ruined their trap.
I wish the swineherd would come,
For this is a lonely watch on a night so dark.

[*He hums*] When Uther lifts his one stone pin
To drink at the brook below the whin,
Down in the hold
You will see gold,
But be quick, boys, quick, or tombstone.

I wish that I had a dog: someone is coming . . .
Someone is coming, a light foot: is it the Queen?
No; it is a man, and sobbing. Halt there! Who are you?

KAI [*disguised*].

For the love of God, sir, mercy! Are you a robber?

TRISTAN

Robber, sir? No, the swineherd. Stand where you are.

Who are you? Hold up your hands. What are you doing here?

KAI

For the love of God, sir, help me to save my daughter.

We've been set upon by robbers. Oh, I am faint!

They burst in a cloud upon us. You heard us scream?

My daughter cried: "Run, fetch the swineherd, father!"

So, sir, I ran. Oh, sir, I am faint. Come swiftly.

My delicate daughter, prey to ruffianly men,

And she a cripple since birth and not quite sane,

Like her poor mother now at peace in the madhouse.

Come, my good sir. Oh, Christian swineherd, or pagan,

There, you can hear her screaming. Oh, come, sir, hurry!

TRISTAN

Hurry! But hurry where? Where is your daughter?

KAI

At the little copse in the dip, there, down the road.

TRISTAN

Strange that I heard no scream.

KAI

The wind was against it
And they choked the screams with a gag.

TRISTAN

Run back to her.
I will call my mates, who are dozing here while I watch.
Shout as you go.

[KAI *runs off, shouting.*]

[KAI *returns at once.*]

KAI

Alas, sir, lost, lost, lost! Good Christian swineherd,
You ought to have come at once when first I called.

TRISTAN

Is your girl killed?

KAI

Worse than killed; taken away.
Taken by ruthless ruffians in her beauty
To guilty splendour in a kitchen of thieves.
Pity a father's tears; an old man's weakness.
Feel my heart beating, like a dying bird waggling.

TRISTAN

Run to Tintagel and borrow the King's blood-
hound.

KAI

Run? An old man like me. If you'd a mother,
For her sake, run.

TRISTAN

I am sworn not to leave the swine.

KAI

Then alas for a lonely old age walking the roads;
No daughter by my side, no filial prattle
Cheering the long tramp; ah! and no woman's
hand
Lighting the fire of twigs to cook the supper.
O desolate old age!

TRISTAN

You wander the roads then?

KAI

A ballad-singer, sir.

TRISTAN

Oh? Sing me a ballad.

KAI

I am too broken with grief.

TRISTAN

Say me one, then.

KAI

I can say nothing but woe and alas my daughter!

TRISTAN

Were you camped when the robbers came?

KAI

No, sir, on foot.

TRISTAN

Had you walked all night?

KAI

All night and the day before,
Thirty long miles through Cornish bog in the rain.

TRISTAN

Thirty long miles through bog in the rain! You lie, man.
Your shoes are as clean as a courtier's; not even dusty.
As for your daughter and robbers, they don't exist.
A nightingale was singing there in the copse
When first you brought the alarm. Get home to your daughter,
This cripple from birth who walks thirty long miles.
Be off!

KAI

Then you don't believe me?

TRISTAN

I don't.

KAI

King Marc
Shall know who keeps his swine; he shall know the truth.
Then we shall see.

TRISTAN

That will be interesting.

KAI

And the world will see.

TRISTAN

That will be clever of it.

KAI

And King Marc will see what all of us see already.

[KAI *goes.*]

TRISTAN

Which of the courtiers was it? It was likest Kai. But I have not done with them yet. Who is that there? Halt!

[BEDWYR *enters.*]

TRISTAN

Explain yourself.

BEDWYR

Be that you zwineherd?

TRISTAN

Who are you?

BEDWYR

Old zwineherd's brother Pig, sent by old zwineherd.

TRISTAN

I didn't know he had a brother. Where from, you?

BEDWYR

I be Queen's pigkeeper, out by her zummer palace.

Hog come to me to-night when he'd talkt with the Queen;
Hog said "I've cut my foot; I'll be late reaching sty;
Get you back, brother," he said, "and help young master."

TRISTAN

But Hog is coming? How soon can he be here?

BEDWYR

Dawn,
Or maybe an hour after. Anyone been here?

TRISTAN

Nobody.

BEDWYR

No? Then it was birds or the pigs.
I could be sworn I heard voices; an old man's voice.
But indeed all be still as a stound: no robbers and nowt.
Why, all be at peace and morning will be in a bit.
All's zafe as a church. I'll watch; you lie and be easy.
No need for two to be up. If a robber should come,
I'd give 'ee a call: you could be up in a trice,
Do'ee lie down, my young master, and sleep while I guard.

TRISTAN

No. Since you said you heard voices, the thieves may be near.

BEDWYR

I think it was just the hogs grunting, or owls eating mice.

TRISTAN

It's better be certain than sorry: we both will stand guard.
How is your brother's hip?

BEDWYR

Which brother's?

TRISTAN

Hog's.

BEDWYR

Ah, Hog's!
His hip: yes.

TRISTAN

Didn't he mention it?

BEDWYR

Not this time.

TRISTAN

You knew about it, of course?

BEDWYR

Oh yes, indeed, yes.
All that he cared to tell.

TRISTAN

He made no secret of't,
He gloried in't to me, for a hip like that
Not many men have; you haven't one, nor have I.

BEDWYR

Why, no; thank heaven.

TRISTAN

It's nothing to thank heaven for.
Many would give one hand for a hip like that.
That was an odd case of Hog's wife's brother's wife?

BEDWYR

Ah, very odd!

TRISTAN

It looked suspicious to me, Pig,
I don't know how it struck you, but I said and say
I shouldn't have liked the case to happen to me.

BEDWYR

Being out with the Queen's swine at the summer palace,
I may not have heard the truth of all that story.

TRISTAN

Why, it was there that it happened; you must have heard it.

BEDWYR

I heard it: yes, but I believe only half
The things that I see, and nothing of what I hear.
Hog said I wasn't to let 'ee watch. Lie down, man,
Sleep while 'ee can: to bed.

TRISTAN

I enjoy our talking.
That's a pretty girl, Hog's daughter; with pretty hair.
Would you call the hair red-gold, or a copper-bronze?

BEDWYR

That's a hard question: I'd call it a sort of wry-
neck
Wryneck or partridge mottle.

TRISTAN

Do you think the lad
Who is always with her, means to marry her?

BEDWYR

Yes.

TRISTAN

What? Out of his mind as he is?

BEDWYR

I'm talking of Cador.

TRISTAN

I'm not. I am talking of one who doesn't
exist.
There is neither lad nor daughter, nor wife's
brother's wife,
Nor hip, nor has Hog a brother, nor are you
swineherd.
You are a courtier; I knew you from the first.
Out of it, Arthur: away!

BEDWYR

I am not Arthur.

TRISTAN

Then whoever you are, be off. Take that direc-
tion.
And make no signals.

BEDWYR

All right, I'll go: good-night.
You won't have long to wait ere you see us again.

[BEDWYR *goes.*]

TRISTAN

I have not done with these knaves; worse is to follow.
Now is the time for a raid, now the East grows grey.
Here one comes creeping—or is it an old dog-wolf?
Halt, there, or I strike! Stand!

HOG

Hist, young master, it's Hog.

TRISTAN

Let me be sure: open your hands; so. Welcome.

HOG

Have they been raiding, master?

TRISTAN

They are all about.
Two, and their mates are coming; now is the hour.

HOG

I knew they'd come, so I've brought my son and my wife.
Come in, my Sowkin and Pigling.

[*They come in.*]

TRISTAN

You are both most welcome.

SOWKIN

Good-morning sir, and our thanks for your kind watching.

PIGLING

I hope you'll find some use for my holly ballow.

TRISTAN

You come in the nick of time. They'll be here in a minute.

HOG

Well, sir, we're four; I say "Get into the pigsty,
In with the pigs": then, if they come to steal pigs,
They'll be into our clutch before they know we are there.

SOWKIN

Trust to my Hog, sweet sir, he's a King at this game.

TRISTAN

In with the pigs, then. Give me your hand, good madam.

SOWKIN

Thank you, kind sir; that's it. And don't be afeared, sir,
The hogs won't hurt 'ee, and though they smell a bit flighty,
It's good for the lungs if you breathe it deep in down.

PIGLING

How about that supper, mother?

SOWKIN

First make all snug.

TRISTAN

Come along, Hog.

HOG

That's that. Now, Pigling, my son.

SOWKIN

Now we'll all sit out of the wind and eat our supper.
That's cheek in that, and this is cider in this.

[*They settle to supper.*]

[*Enter* ARTHUR, KAI, BEDWYR.]

ARTHUR

So you have not thriven? How came it that you failed, Kai?

KAI

The ruffian was suspicious and most astute.

BEDWYR

I did not see round his questions; he trapped me fairly.

ARTHUR

What shall I do, then?

KAI

These are the pigsties, Arthur . . .
He is not here . . . he has gone. Look yonder, Bedwyr.

BEDWYR

No, there is no guard here.

KAI

O treacherous peachick!
Is that not like one of these sprigs of to-day?
Take a poor swineherd's place and then break faith with him.
He has gone to his doxy, or else to his bed of ease,
Leaving the swineherd's freedom to shift for itself.

ARTHUR

What shall we do; climb over and take a hog?
Or pull a gap in the paling and drive them out?

BEDWYR

I should say drive them; but what is it Kai most wants?

KAI

To bring this whipper-snapper into disgrace.

ARTHUR

Pull lown the pales, then, and the herd will be ours.

KAI

The herd is the King's, Arthur; so are these palings.
I as the steward will act here for the King.
I will not risk the loss of a hundred hogs:
We will step inside the pen and choose one hog,
Evidence to King Marc of his swineherd's slackness
And of Tristan's want of faith.

We will take this hog,
Call King Marc from his bed and hand it to him,
Saying, "Thus do domestic traitors guard your swine."

ARTHUR

You are very bitter about this young man, Kai.

KAI

Medicines are bitter. I will be first to lay hand
Upon a pig.

ARTHUR

Have you had much dealing with pigs?

KAI

No; but I'm competent to handle a pig.

ARTHUR

A pig is a big strong beast.

BEDWYR

But only at first.
They tire at once; shut up like this they are fat.

ARTHUR

You have dealt with pigs, then, Bedwyr?

BEDWYR

Once at the Fair
I wrestled a pig at the good old Cornish game
Of putting a pig into pen: and I put him in.

ARTHUR

Then you and Kai are designed to capture him now;
I will stand outside the pen and help as I can.

KAI

Come on then, Bedwyr; Arthur shall hold our clothes.
There is my cloak; my cap; my tunic, no, strip, man,
Keep our things clean: we shall go from here to the King.

BEDWYR

True. I'd forgotten that. Well, there is my tunic.

ARTHUR

You cannot enter the swine pen in those shoes;
Take off your under things: that's better, much better,
Now are you like those heroes, whoever they were,
Who wrestled the what's-its-name in the how-d'ye-call-it.

BEDWYR

Won't you strip, Arthur?

ARTHUR

No, for I am the guard.
If Tristan should reappear or the swineherd come,
You will need defence; but the coast is clear; are you ready?

BEDWYR

Take a cruise round, Arthur; I doubt that the coast is clear.

[ARTHUR *goes.*]

KAI

No need for Arthur to go.

BEDWYR

It is safer so,
For these young devils, like Tristan, are full of tricks.

KAI

Where on earth has Arthur gone? We shall catch our deaths.
We might have caught twenty hogs and have gone by this time.

BEDWYR

He has just gone to the pen's end to make certain.

KAI

I am not going to freeze to death in my shirt
While Arthur looks at the moon. I am going in,
Into the pen. Come, give me a leg over.

BEDWYR

There you are, then. What is inside? Can you see at all?

KAI

It is all safe. Come over, Bedwyr, I'll help you.

BEDWYR

Where are the pigs sleeping?

KAI

In the corner yonder.

BEDWYR

Whereabouts, Kai? I do not see them.

KAI

Be quiet!
They are sound asleep: we must do as the lion does,
Leap upon one, before the rest are awake.
Those dark masses below the pales are the pigs.

BEDWYR

I see them now. Spit on your hands, Kai.

KAI

The big one,
The fat hog nearest the wall, that is our quarry.

BEDWYR

Come on: not another word.

* * * * *

HOG

I'll learn 'ee steal King's hogs!

SOWKIN

Down with un, husband!

PIGLING

Ballow one, and ballow two, and ballow dree!

BEDWYR

O I am killed! . . .

TRISTAN

One of them's down!

PIGLING

Hold to him, mother, until I give him ballow.

SOWKIN

Quick, son, he's slippery as an eel in sin.

PIGLING

I'll slippery him with ballow; ballow 'ee Bong.

KAI

Alas, alas, my country!

SOWKIN

Here comes another.
Get your sling, Pigling, and blast him like Goliath.

PIGLING [*opening the pen and coming out*].

No, mother, it's someone running. Well might he run!

TRISTAN

There were only two, then?

HOG

Two. Here they are, both corpses.

KAI

Oh, water, water! cold water!

BEDWYR

My neck is broken!

PIGLING

It hasn't been broken yet; you haven't been tried yet.
He's wandering: mother, he thinks he's hanged already.

BEDWYR

I'm one of the King's household.

KAI

So am I.

BEDWYR

We both
Are knights of King Marc's court: eminent courtiers.

SOWKIN

Look at this raiment here. Courtiers indeed!
Not courtiers; robbers, who robbed all these fine clothes.

HOG

And thought to rob his sacred Kingship's hogs.
And might have, too, but for unprospering pride.

BEDWYR

We are not robbers.

HOG

You are. We heard your words;
You meant to take the fat hog nearest the wall.

BEDWYR

Take us before the King.

PIGLING

We'll take you to him
As soon as it is light: then, cord to the windpipe,
To save your wives the expense of cooking breakfast.

KAI

I tell you, lout, I am Kai, the King's steward.

HOG

Now, quiet, quiet; remember your latter end;
Don't take the name of the Lord in vain.

[*A horn is heard.*]

TRISTAN

A hunting horn!
King Marc is coming a-hunting: here is the King.

[*Enter* MARC, *with* ARTHUR.]

MARC

I come to ask if a hog were lost this night.
But what and who are these?

TRISTAN

They are thieves, King Marc,
Caught in the pen red-handed a moment since.

MARC

And what brings you here, Tristan?

TRISTAN

I came to help guard
So that your swineherd might save his hogs to the end.

MARC

Bring the two thieves before me. What plea can you urge
That you be not hanged at once?

KAI

My lord, I am Kai.

BEDWYR

And I am Bedwyr, the Knight.

MARC

Bedwyr and Kai!
What brought you into the swine-pen?

KAI

We saw no guards . . .
We got into the pen to defend the herd;
Then all these set upon us before we could speak.

MARC

But why get into the pen to defend the herd?
Defend them from whom? What brought you here in the first place?

SOWKIN

He came to take the fat hog nearest the wall;
We heard him say so. But that fat hog was my husband.
He wasn't a wise choice.

MARC

Did you want a pig, Kai?

KAI

No, not to steal; but we heard that Prince Tristan here
Was guarding the pen, and we thought that to take a pig
From him, would be held good fun.

MARC

But the very thought
Of taking a King's pig, why, it is treason, Kai.
You, as my steward, surely know that?

KAI

My master,
We would have spilled our bloods to the last to defend
Your swine from any but Tristan.

MARC

Do not say Tristan, nor even Prince Tristan, steward;
He is a King.

KAI

I had not heard he was crowned
King Tristan, lord.

MARC

It is a serious matter
When stewards and knights break laws, even in game.
You have been hurt.

PIGLING

I gave them a palt with ballow.

KAI

I am cold from my wound, lord; may I put on my clothes?

MARC

Why did you take them off? It is Cornish law
That any man taking a thief may have his gear.
These clothes are Hog's and Pigling's; take them, they're yours.
And, Hog, I give you your freedom and rank you here
My master swineherd.
Be off, you two, to the castle;
Quick, ere the women be up to see you pass.

[KAI *and* BEDWYR *go.*]

Arthur, go with them: fetch them a couple of cloaks.

You swineherds, move from earshot a little space.

[*They move off.*]

Nephew, there is much talk, which I never heeded;
Now there is much ill-blood which I have to heed.
I cannot have my courtiers poisoned with rage
By you, who have no place here.
I have been too tolerant.
Your Kingdom cries for your rule.

TRISTAN

I say let it cry.

MARC

It shall not cry in vain while Cornwall demands
That you be gone from Tintagel. Therefore, my nephew,
I order you to take ship and leave this Kingdom.

TRISTAN

Order me to leave Cornwall!

MARC

Order you strictly.
Banish you, if you choose, on pain of slaying
By the first man who meets you: go before noon.

TRISTAN

You drive me out; you dare; drive me, who killed Kolbein!
Why, uncle, you are King because of this hand!

[ARTHUR *enters.*]

MARC

Arthur has orders from me to see you aboard.

ARTHUR

Come, Tristan, I have a sword and you but a knife.
There are twenty spearmen here.
Must I call them, Tristan?

[TRISTAN *goes with him.*]

CURTAIN

[*Half minute's interval*].

[*Full stage. Tintagel.*]

MARC

You asked for Tristan. I said that he is not here.
That was not the whole truth, Isolt; I sent him hence;
Banished him hence, on pain of slaying, in short.
He sailed to the north, never to come back here.

ISOLT

May I know your reasons for forcing him hence thus?

MARC

Yes. His own good first, since his kingdom needed him.
Then, since this folly of Bedwyr, Kai and the swineherd,
I would not have him in Cornwall: so he has gone.

ISOLT

He was my friend, King Marc; he wooed me to Cornwall

Ere ever I looked on you; could you not wait
Until I had said farewell to my banished friend?

MARC

Isolt, I wished him away before you returned;
Evil tongues bracket your names together in gossip.
Such talk must cease.

ISOLT

Is a Queen to be ruled by talk?

MARC

Yes, madam; yes, if she will not rule herself.
Tristan, a King, was keeping the swine while he sent
The man with a message to you. I am ashamed
That a friend of yours should have so little esteem
For you, as the Queen, as to send the swineherd to you,
Whatever the message was, which I do not ask.
Filthy, no doubt, having such a messenger.

ISOLT

It was not filthy: it was a love message.

MARC

Love message! Do you dare say it?

ISOLT

I do dare.
It was a message of love from a man who loves me,
Warning me of a trap for the Queen of Cornwall
Set by her loving husband at his Knight's bidding.

MARC

Now I will ask a question I meant to spare.
Why did he send the swineherd? Had you intended
To meet last night, if I were away?

ISOLT

Yes, we had.

MARC

You have met before, in secret?

ISOLT

Ask your court spies.

MARC

I ask my wife, beautiful Isolt, my wife,
Who pledged me her troth last week, the love of my soul.
Ah, my beloved, whatever the young man is,
Let it not weigh with a husband's love: I love you
More than a boy can. And we are married. Besides,
I have heard it said that often, when people marry,
In the first days they shrink from each other. It's true.
So he seems much to you?

ISOLT

There is no question of seems.

MARC

Love is a blindness full of seeming, my Isolt.

ISOLT

There is no seeming in my love and no blindness.

Nothing else is, or matters, or means, save this.
And against this shaking and transfiguration, you
Plot with a steward and lie to ensnare the Queen.

MARC

That passionate sin is done. You are married to me,
And I love you so that I will permit no rival.

ISOLT

I love him so that I am all his, to the spirit.

MARC

Keep him from Cornwall, then: he dies if he come here.
You are my wife till you die.
Love me or not, I will not share you, believe me.

[MARC *goes.*]

ISOLT

How was the secret known? Which courtier learned it?
What did we do to betray it? Or was it Brangwen?
Brangwen alone knew all, and the King knows all.

[BRANGWEN *enters.*]

ISOLT

Brangwen, come here to me. Have you betrayed me?

BRANGWEN

God forbid, mistress.

ISOLT

You lie; you have told the King.

BRANGWEN

O Queen, I had rather die than tell of my shame.

ISOLT

You have loved King Marc since you pledged him in the wine.

BRANGWEN

That is true, madam; may God forgive me the sin.

ISOLT

You have told him all, hoping to win his favour.

BRANGWEN

Sweet mistress, do not kill me. I swear to heaven
That I have not breathed a word. Only this hour
Marc's men took me and threatened me with their swords;
Said they would kill me if I would not accuse you.
I said "that you harboured me, who am spotted and base,"
That that was the only fault you had, sweet mistress.
That is the only betrayal I have betrayed.

ISOLT

Marc's men? Which? Bedwyr and Kai?

BRANGWEN

Yes, and others;
With swords at my throat swearing I hid your love.

ISOLT

Who has betrayed me, Brangwen, if not you? Traitress,
It was you!

BRANGWEN

Madam, it was not: this I can prove.

ISOLT

Prove it then, swiftly.

BRANGWEN

Queen, at this very moment
Tristan is there in the glan. I have not betrayed him.

ISOLT

Here, with a price on his head?

BRANGWEN

Disguised as a harper.
He is in a hut by the brook; he sent me to you
To say he will clamber the rocks up to your window,
Now, or some minutes hence.

ISOLT

O my God, as we talk
He may be there! O girl, forgive my suspicion,
I know not where I am led.

BRANGWEN

Sweet mistress, my lady,
I will deck you for him and make you fair for your love.

[*They go upstairs.*]
[MARC *and* KAI *enter.*]

MARC

You say he is here, dressed as a harper?

KAI

And plans
To enter the Queen's room, clambering up the rocks.
I heard him telling the maid.

MARC

He shall die, if taken.

KAI

After my humbling the other day I am loath
To labour with zeal for the King; but to get proof
I have laid rye-meal upon the rocks and earth
Under Queen Isolt's window, and in her room
From the floor beneath the window up to her bed.
If a man step in the flour, his track will show.
It will be dark; he will not notice the meal.

MARC

How soon will he come?

KAI

At once: even now, my King.
You will hear him come, for Queen Isolt's window hinge
Is rusty and creaks.

[*Enter* BEDWYR.]

I posted Bedwyr to watch.

BEDWYR

The harper went to the rocks by the Queen's window;
He started to climb up.

KAI

Listen.

MARC

That was no hinge.

KAI

Tapping with finger-tips; she is going to open.
There is the window, my lord.

BEDWYR

He is wearing a sword.

MARC

Call Arthur hither.

[BEDWYR *goes to fetch* ARTHUR.]

That it should be my wife and nephew who wrong me,
Those nearest to me, my sister's son and my heir!

KAI

It is always the nearest who deal the cruellest blows.
Here is Arthur, my lord.

[ARTHUR *and* BEDWYR *enter.*]

MARC

Tell him; I cannot, Kai.

KAI

Arthur, it is thought that the banished Tristan is here
Now, with the Queen, in her room.

BEDWYR

He is in the room;
My guard saw him clamber up and tap at the window,
And the window opened and white arms helped him in.

KAI

He is with the Queen at this moment and we shall take him.

ARTHUR

Why am I bidden to this assembly, King Marc?

MARC

Because if I take my Queen, as I fear, I wish
To put her to trial before you.

ARTHUR

You, as the King,
Are the law, not we.

KAI

We will bear witness, Arthur.
Shall we proceed, King Marc; bid the Queen open?

BEDWYR

My guard are ready with spears below the window;
He cannot escape as he came.

MARC

Summon the Queen,
Bid her to open her door that her room be searched.

ARTHUR

One moment, Marc. I am bidden here as accomplice
To the trapping of a woman, a Queen, my hostess.
I take no part in a trap. Therefore: Take heed, you!
Danger! a trap is set! danger! Look out! Look out!

Here come King Marc and his men to murder you!

[*He raises a loud alarm.*]

KAI

You devil, Arthur, to give them warning! Be silent.

[*He knocks at the door.*]

Is the Queen within? King Marc bids Queen Isolt open!

If the Queen be there, let her answer the King's summons.

ISOLT

Who is there, calling the Queen?

KAI

It is I, Sir Kai,

Charged by the King to bid you open this door.

Will you open, or else compel us to use force?

ISOLT

These are strange words to use to the Queen, steward.

Go tell King Marc, "I will open to none but him."

KAI

King Marc, she says "she will open to none but you."

MARC

Wait, then, until I come.

[MARC *goes to the upper door.*]

Open, I command you.

[*She opens.*]

ISOLT

Why do you rouse me thus in the dead of night?

MARC

Because I must search your room. Light candles, Bedwyr,
There at the brazier.

ISOLT

Why do you bring your soldiers
Thus to my room, to search? What think you to find?

MARC

If you know not, madam, I know not and will atone.
Thrust through the curtains, Bedwyr; look in the corner.

KAI

King Marc, will you take this light and see for yourself
The footprints marked in the meal. Did you see, my lord?

MARC

I have seen with my own eyes.

KAI

Bedwyr's watchers
No doubt will have caught him as he tried to escape.

MARC

Madam, I ask you to have the goodness to cloak

And join me there in the hall: I would speak with you.

[ARTHUR, KAI, BEDWYR, MARC, *in the hall.*]

Did your watchers kill him, Bedwyr?

BEDWYR

No, lord; they failed.
In the dark, he leaped among them, laid Corvus dead
And so escaped in the dark, none can say where.

MARC

Corvus, my guard, laid dead! You, Kai, and Bedwyr, saw
The footprints marked on the floor in the Queen's room?
No need to speak; you saw it and therefore know.

ARTHUR

This is no quarrel of mine, but I ask to remain,
Lest one, my hostess the Queen, should need a friend.

[*Enter* ISOLT.]

MARC

Sit you down there, madam; I have something to say.

[ISOLT *sits.*]

A man was watched to your window and seen to enter.
The marks of his feet are plain on your room floor.

But that alarm was given, we should have caught him
In your room with you. You are the Queen of Cornwall,
Quit of the forms of law, but bound to a choice.
Either you shall declare what man was with you,
Or drink the water of test to prove your innocence.

ISOLT

Dismiss these men from the presence: is it not enough
That you bring them into my room in the dead of night
But that you, the King, must arraign the Queen before them?

MARC

I bring three witnesses as the law prescribes.
What man was with you?

ISOLT

A man who came in and went.
Being dark, I could not see his face: the flour
Wastefully spilled by your steward on the floor
Will show his footprints.

MARC

You expected him, you knew him;
Who was he?

ISOLT

Nay, your steward expected him,
You and this bevy of knights expected him;
I should ask you: Who was he?

MARC

God's passion and death!

ISOLT

Will you repeat? I could not distinguish the name.

ARTHUR

Beautiful Queen, and you, King Marc, may I speak?
Life will have to be lived when this is settled.
Do not make life more hard by bitterness now.
Marc, may I counsel the Queen apart one moment?

MARC

Yes, if she care to hear.

ISOLT

I will gladly hear him.

[MARC, KAI, BEDWYR, *go up stage.*
ARTHUR *and* ISOLT *come down.*]

Did Tristan escape when he leapt from the window, then?

ARTHUR

Yes; he killed Corvus and got away unwounded.

ISOLT

I thank you, Arthur, for giving me the alarm.

ARTHUR

I do not care for trappings: but now to peace.
Cannot this trouble be mended, or ended, lady?

ISOLT

Mended? I am as may-blossom in a flood,
Or a straw in flames; when the flood has run to sea

And the flames burnt out, I may be mended or ended.
What is this water of test?

ARTHUR

A drink of ordeal.

ISOLT

Poison?

ARTHUR

The innocent drink it without harm.

ISOLT

What chance is there of Tristan reaching his ship?

ARTHUR

No great chance, madam.

ISOLT

Has he any?

ARTHUR

Not much:
They are beating the countryside with a hundred men.

ISOLT

Thank you, good Arthur. I have been blest this night:
I have had a lover and found a friend, a true one.
May the gods bless you, Arthur.

ARTHUR

You, too, Queen Isolt.

ISOLT

Tell them that I will drink this poisonous brew.

ARTHUR

The Queen does me the honour to bid me say
That she will drink your water of test, King Marc.

MARC

I am thankful that she, being innocent, accepts
To drink this drug, which the guilty dare not drink.
Truth, which mortals may hide, is revealed by the gods.

ISOLT

It is safer to be in God's hand than in man's.

MARC

Bring me the flask from the cask in the aumbry
On the gospel side of the altar in the chapel.

[BEDWYR *goes.*]

ISOLT

Poison like this is a useful drug to a husband,
He can murder his wife, yet lay the blame upon her.

KAI

None but the guilty are poisoned by it, Queen Isolt.

ISOLT

Have all you innocents drunk it?

MARC

It is your privilege,
Should you desire, to see a priest ere you drink.

ISOLT

The drink will shrive me enough; let the priest sleep.

[*Sings*] A ship came west from the eastern kings,
With a cargo aboard of three good things:
She had gold to change and spice to sell,
And a beggar in rags with news to tell.

[BEDWYR *enters.*]

BEDWYR

I have brought the flask and a cup, so please your grace.

MARC

Hold the cup, Bedwyr. I call you all to witness
That the seal on the sacred flasket is unbroken.
I break the seal. Show that the cup is empty.

BEDWYR

Bear witness, the cup is empty; a clean glass.

MARC

I empty the hallowed water that shows the truth.
May this bright water declare your innocence.
Take the cup, Bedwyr; offer it to the Queen.

BEDWYR

Madam, I offer the cup as the King bids.

ISOLT

I am your Queen, fellow: offer it on your knees.

BEDWYR

I offer it on my knees.

ISOLT

I take it from you.
This cold, bright poison, like to my husband's love,
Will soon declare the truth: no, I will declare it.

I am Tristan's queen, not Marc's: I was Tristan's love
Before ever I saw King Marc: I am Tristan's now.
I drink to the setting free of the soul within me,
That it may follow my love, my Tristan slain.

[TRISTAN *enters.*]

TRISTAN

I am not slain yet. Fling down that poison, Isolt.
See there, it burns like quicklime: and you stood by
Making this lady, your Queen, drink of this death!
Here is one for you, my poisoner, one for you!
Come with me, Isolt.

BEDWYR

Come all you King's men, help!

KAI

Come, rescue help! Tristan has seized Queen Isolt.

MARC

Stand back, Bedwyr and Kai. Tristan, hark to me.
Your godless and lawless path leads to destruction.

TRISTAN

Your godly and lawful road was leading to murder.
Keep clear of me, I warn you: keep your men clear.
I have horses below and I am going with Isolt,

And the man who tries to stop me shall die on the spot.

ISOLT

I am going with Tristan; he is my lover; I, his.
This is your Cornish crown; this, your Queen's wedding ring.
I go with my lover to a den in the forest,
Or a wet rock by a brook, or a tilted deck,
And the infamy of the world; and I go with joy.

[*They go out together.*]

CURTAIN

[*Three minutes' interval.*]

[*Full stage. The forest, near the Alan.*]

DINAN

My lord and master, your subjects send me to beg
That you leave this living here in the wood with your friend
And come to your kingdom at once.

TRISTAN

And I reply:
Will they take the queen of my choice?

DINAN

No, my prince, no.
They ask you to leave this lady, since we in the North
Demand an unspotted queen.

TRISTAN

Then inform my subjects
That I am filled with beautiful thoughts, and will not
Trouble my joy with a realm.

DINAN

Son, they risked their lives,
And starved their bellies, to help you, for twenty years.

TRISTAN

Then say I will come in a little while: not yet.

DINAN

But the heathen are pressing in with fire and sword:
We ask for our King to lead our host to the war.

TRISTAN

War is an unreal thing to a man who has love.

DINAN

It is not an unreal thing to your friends and comrades.
Hoel is killed, that you used to hunt with: and Ambrose,
Your friend, little Ambrose, was captured and murdered
By heathen raiders: only last week.

TRISTAN

What, Ambrose?

DINAN

He was heard saying "You wait till Tristan returns."
He thought you would come.

TRISTAN

And I have said that I will. . . .
And soon, when I choose.

DINAN

Come now; there can be no soon.

TRISTAN

I, who am King, have stated my will: my subjects
Must wait, as I bid.

DINAN

I am your subject, Tristan,
Only a subject; but your future and fame
Are dear to me as my blood. Fling off this fever,
This ruin and rot of an unchaste, forsworn trull.

TRISTAN

Take back those words!

DINAN

I will not, because they are true—
You know that they are.

TRISTAN

That ends it, Dinan: now, go.

DINAN

Will you come to your realm?

TRISTAN

When I think it fitting.

DINAN

But now?

TRISTAN

No; I will not come now.

DINAN

Then your subjects tell you,
Through me, that they cast you out from kingship and kingdom,
And brand you traitor and choose another as king.
I have declared their bidding.
I'd have been wiser to have let Kolbein spear you
When you were a little baby.
Farewell, Tristan.

[*He goes out.*]

CURTAIN

[*No wait.*]

[*Front stage.*]

[*Enter* MARC *and* ARTHUR.]

ARTHUR

So, Marc, as I have said, the pagans have marched. Will you come, with the Cornish army, to fight them with me?

MARC

I will muster my men at once: we can march forthwith.

ARTHUR

With those and the Mendip men we shall beat them back.

But who comes here? It is Dinan, Prince Tristan's man.

MARC

You were promised death if you came to this land again.

DINAN

You may kill me if you wish: here is my dagger.

MARC

Where are your master traitor and mistress queen?

DINAN

They are in hell, King Marc.

MARC

You mean, they are dead?

DINAN

They have not yet the luck to be dead; they linger.

MARC

Do you serve them here?

DINAN

I have no service with either.

ARTHUR

Grant him your pardon, Marc; he may give you news.

MARC

Here is your dagger, fellow: I shall not harm you,
No, nor those others; I am too sick at heart
To wish to make others as wretched as myself.

Only, you said that they are in hell . . . I would grieve
If I thought that they needed help.

DINAN

They need the help of the gods; they are past men's help.
There is no peace for those two under the moon.
Nothing but horror of heart from their greatness ruined.
They live in a den by the brook, like the fox or otter.
They dare not face the daylight: they hunt by night
And at dawn they sleep with a drawn sword laid between them.

MARC

Are you sure of that?

DINAN

Yes, I will take my oath on it.
If you will swear to spare them, I'll show them to you.

MARC

My sister's son and my wife; they are safe from me.

DINAN

Are they safe from your men-at-arms?

MARC

Yes, on my oath.

DINAN

Come, this way, then, King Marc: you shall see them.
Softly.

[*They move off.*]

[*The curtains, opening the full stage, discover* TRISTAN *and* ISOLT *asleep, a sword between them. Enter* MARC *and* DINAN.]

DINAN

There are the two as I said. Are they not lovely?

MARC

Ay, they are lovely. Leave me alone with them.

DINAN

Step quietly, lest you wake him and he kill you.

MARC

Our cups are not yet drunken, our three cold draughts.

[DINAN *goes.*]

Youth had to turn to youth, I was too old for her.
She is so beautiful, she would damn a saint.
I could strike them dead; many would strike them dead.
Killing them will not bring me quiet again.
He is more of a man than I, my sister's son.
He would kill me, were I thus.
They are unhappy,
So Dinan says. They are happier than the King.

They shall see that I found them sleeping and pitied them.

[*He lays his glove between them.*]

Lead me out of this, Dinan, back to Arthur.

[*He goes out.*]

ISOLT

Yes? Who is there? Who goes there in the thicket?

Someone was here.

TRISTAN

Where? When? There is no one, Isolt.

It was some bird or beast going by on the leaves.

ISOLT

Someone stood looking down, with thought to kill us.

TRISTAN

You have been dreaming.

ISOLT

No; this was not a dream.

I knew it, but could not stir. Look! What is this glove?

Tristan, while we were sleeping, Marc has been here.

This is his glove.

TRISTAN

It is true. That is the King's.

But had he been here, he would have killed us, surely . . .

ISOLT

It is not Marc's way, to kill.

TRISTAN

No, not by himself;
But he dropped this glove in his hurry to call his men.
He will be here with his knights to take us, Isolt.

ISOLT

Tristan, he did not drop the glove in a hurry,
He laid it carefully on the hilt of the sword
To show that he might have killed us and did not kill.
He spared us.

TRISTAN

I should have guarded while you slept.
We two must go upstream to the secret cave;
And start at once; we cannot trust to his mercy.

ISOLT

I am not sure that I can go to the cave.

TRISTAN

You must: it is not safe here.

ISOLT

No; unsafe henceforth.
I am unsafe henceforth to you, my Tristan.

TRISTAN

I welcome the risks you bring.

ISOLT

That is not what I meant.

I meant that I have been harsh, he has been generous.
He has taken the ground from beneath my feet.

TRISTAN

How so?

ISOLT

I cannot forget this. Tristan, if you had been Marc,
And had seen us lying, would you have spared me?

TRISTAN

Yes.

ISOLT

And my lover?

TRISTAN

Yes, asleep. I'd have roused him and fought him.

ISOLT

He is greater than we two, Tristan.

TRISTAN

He plotted
With Kai to trap you; he tried to poison you.
Had I been awake when he came, I'd have laid him dead.

ISOLT

Yes, he risked that, too.

TRISTAN

Yes, the first risk of his life.

ISOLT

Sorrow has nobled him; he has done such a deed

As none but a great man could. Therefore I'll show him
That I see his greatness.

TRISTAN

I've shown that I see his weakness.
I have not killed him: that is enough for Marc.
And now you are mine.

ISOLT

I was till to-day: not now.

TRISTAN

Isolt, where are you going?

ISOLT

Back to Marc, barefoot.

TRISTAN

You shall not! What? to be pelted and put to death?

ISOLT

Will my lover bar my way?

TRISTAN

No. Let us use reason.
I see your mood. This living here in the wilds
Has been too hard for you: you want to go back
To a world of women and friends and fires and homes.
We will go to my kingdom.

ISOLT

Your subjects have cast you out.

TRISTAN

We will go to Arthur, then.

ISOLT

He has gone to the war.

TRISTAN

Then we will go to your home.

ISOLT

I have no home now.

TRISTAN

Your mother's house is a home.

ISOLT

Nevermore to me.

TRISTAN

Because of me?

ISOLT

Partly.

TRISTAN

You could go there alone.

ISOLT

I could not go there.

TRISTAN

Why not?

ISOLT

I should not dare.
This love, that I thought was great, is blindness and greed
And I am unclean, unclean, till I drive some nail
Right through this passionate heart.
If he scourge me, well.
If he kill me, well; he shall have his chance and choice.

If he cast me out, I will come again, perhaps;
But until then, I am a thing.

TRISTAN

So am I, Isolt.
A young thing, much in love, who saved you from death,
And flung his kingdom away for the love of you;
Weigh that with creeping in like a thief with a glove.

ISOLT

Marc, who is cruelly hurt, is great in his pain.

TRISTAN

Meaning that I am little?

ISOLT

O Tristan, beloved,
See it as I do.

TRISTAN

I cannot see it as you.
Either you have gone mad or you never loved me.

ISOLT

Never loved you, Tristan? Do not let us be bitter.
We have trodden the depths, let us rise to the heights.

TRISTAN

By heights, meaning that you return to your husband?

ISOLT

I'll pay a great deed with another.

TRISTAN

Yes, raiment and women
Are what you want, not me, who am ruined for you.
Get to your Marc; and tell him I'll tear him piecemeal
If once he touch you. Go, get to your heights and depths . . .
I'll follow deer, not women, henceforth, and stab them,
Stab them and stab them dead. Out! get to your husband.

CURTAIN

[*No wait.*]

[*Front stage.*]
[MARC *and* ARTHUR.]

ARTHUR

We will march at dawn, then, Marc. We shall give them battle
About full moon. I'll come with your horse at dawn.

MARC

Till dawn, then, Arthur: good-night.

ARTHUR

Good-night.

[ARTHUR *goes.* ISOLT *enters.*]

MARC

Who are you, lady?

ISOLT

I am Isolt, your wife, come to return your glove.
I say that I have sinned in act and in thought,
Broken all vows, all pacts, tricked you, betrayed you.
Now, toucht to loyalty by the greatness in you,
I stand ashamed by your generous deed, my King.
I come to atone, or to bear my punishment.

MARC

Isolt, my queen, we have been harsh to each other.

ISOLT

You do not know my worst.

MARC

You have suffered from mine.
Let us put by the past; for I love you, Isolt,
More than words tell. I march to the wars at dawn.
The knights who poisoned your peace from hatred of you,
Have marched already: you have no enemies here;
None but dear lovers now. Go: robe you and crown you,
I will declare you the Queen and the ruler here
While I am east at the war.

ISOLT

I will atone, Marc;
I promise. God bless you, lord.

MARC

And you, too, Isolt.
I shall be home from the wars by the summer's end,
Please God, my Queen. Our life shall be different then.
Come, Queen of Cornwall.

[*They go out.*]
[*Half minute's interval.*]

[*The main stage. Tintagel.*]
[HOG *and* SOWKIN]

HOG

Our Queen has kept great state since King Marc went warring.

SOWKIN

She should not wear this black; King Marc isn't dead.

HOG

She wears the black because King Marc is away.

SOWKIN

Many might say she wears the black for another.

HOG

Now, Sowkin, now! whatever the other was,
He is not now. She has shut her doors upon him,
Turned her thoughts from him, and all is for King Marc.

SOWKIN

The more's the pity, I say, for our poor daughter.
She thinks of nothing but this Prince Tristan in sorrow.
Run mad in the woods, they say.

HOG

He is crazed from love,
And our girl Pixne is right to be sorry for him;
But for his friendship we wouldn't be free to-day.

SOWKIN

Set free. Ah, husband, many a time and oft
I'd have given much to be back among the swine;
It was so homely among those dear kind creatures;
They weren't like courtiers: they loved you for what you were.

HOG

The Queen says, after the war we're to be rangers;
Which means I'll have a horse and a red stomach-piece,
And you'll be mistress ranger and carry keys.
Think of that! carry keys on a dingle-dangle.

SOWKIN

I hope these glories will not turn us from truths.
I fear for you, my Hog, as I fear for Pixne.
You were always ones for the world.
When will the wars end?

HOG

Here comes the Queen, our mistress: God save you, lady.

ISOLT

You were asking about the war's end. There is news.
The Cornish men have come to the dyke with Arthur,
They expect to fight the heathen at once. Perhaps
They have already fought and ended the war.
We shall have more news during to-day, no doubt.
Tell Constans he must go with the horses to-night.

HOG

He shall be told, O Queen.

[HOG *and* SOWKIN *go out.*]

ISOLT

Would I were a man, to be out there in the battle,
Instead of a woman, toiling to keep from brooding
On the fierce memories which are woman's portion,
Out there in the forest, where the river runs,
And the soft-foot deer go, and the otter plays,
And the partridge calls, my lover waits for me.
He waits in vain; I have bolted the bars on love.

[BRANGWEN *enters.*]

BRANGWEN

The hunter speared you a salmon in the river.
He said that he saw a young man in the forest.

ISOLT

I have no wish to hear of what man he saw.

BRANGWEN

This man was running frantic among the trees,

Beating his head, that was all crowned with flowers.

ISOLT

There are many masterless men, and madmen, too,
In the great wood.

BRANGWEN

This man wore all the flowers
That you most love: June flowers, sweet dog-rose buds,
Big ox-eye daisies, that children make old men of,
And clever cops that are partly red, part white.

ISOLT

If he be mad, he is happier than some sane.
If the hunter go again to that forest place,
Let him not look at such madmen, nor bring tales
Back to this house about them. My madness is dead.

[*She goes out.*]

BRANGWEN

You are she who forced me into your husband's bed
So that you might love this madman. Now you have Marc
At the war, because you fled him; and Tristan mad.
Had Marc but drunken the wine, he would have loved me.
Ah! woe to you if you turn again from the King.

[TRISTAN *climbs in by window.*]

TRISTAN

Where is this Marc, this so-called King of Cornwall?

BRANGWEN

By the Severn mouth, at the war, with Arthur, my prince.

TRISTAN

You lie! Marc goes to no wars. Where is he hidden?

BRANGWEN

You know me, Prince; you know that I do not lie.

TRISTAN

How many miles to his camp?

BRANGWEN

A hundred at least.

TRISTAN

It is not a hundred.

BRANGWEN

It's over the moor and the plain,
And over the Mendips beyond.

TRISTAN

O God! O God!
He is out of my reach. When does he plan to return?

BRANGWEN

Not till autumn.

TRISTAN

Ah, God, I cannot get there to kill him,

Nor live till he comes; but I'll kill his steward at least.

BRANGWEN

He too has gone to the war. O Prince, you are bleeding,
And fevered and broken and starved.

TRISTAN

Yes, I stumble and hit things.

BRANGWEN

I will have a bed prepared.

TRISTAN

No bed for me here.
No; they strew flour about the beds, for traps.
After those traps, all's fair.
I've been running the forest . . .
The moon was there and the deer and the grey wolves . . .
Pitter-patter, pitter-patter, with fangs gleaming . . .
But a moor-man told me that Marc had murdered her,
So I'll break his neck across and tear out his heart.
But a hundred miles, you said: I haven't the strength.
Brangwen, sweet Brangwen, I want to kiss the ground
Where that most beautiful thing lies buried, at peace.

BRANGWEN

Sir Tristan, Queen Isolt is not dead, but alive.

TRISTAN

Mind what you say, girl; I am unable to bear.

BRANGWEN

She is well.

TRISTAN

Then where is her prison?

BRANGWEN

She is the Queen.

TRISTAN

And here? In the castle? Take me to where she is.

BRANGWEN

Sweet Prince, you must wait.

TRISTAN

I am mad from waiting. Take me,
Or I'll kill you.

BRANGWEN

Oh, you are hurting! Loose me, Prince.
You will frighten her as you are. I will bring raiment,
You shall bathe and dress; then see her.

TRISTAN

I'll see her now.

BRANGWEN

She thinks you dead. For pity's sake let me warn her.

TRISTAN

Tell her at once then, girl.

BRANGWEN

Yes; but you make ready.
Come with me, Prince. What bliss for you both
to meet.
This way, Prince Tristan. While you dress I will
tell her.

[*She leads him off.* ISOLT *enters.*]

ISOLT

Tristan is mad, she said. He is saner than I.
O I would that we loved like the birds, and then
fled south!
What is this hunting spear? It is Tristan's spear.
Yes; it is Tristan's spear. Did the hunter find it?
Or did Tristan bring it here? Yes, Tristan is here,
To take me back. They'll think that I sent for
him.
Where is he now? Who is there?

[HOG *enters.*]

HOG

It is I, my Queen.
Sir Bedwyr brings news of the war: he asks to
see you. . . .
He is all foundered from riding.

ISOLT

Bring him in, Ranger.
But, Ranger, wait. Have you see Prince Tristan
to-day?
Or heard of his being here?

HOG

No, madam, indeed.

ISOLT

Do you know who found this spear, or brought it hither?

HOG

No spear like that came in at the gate, Queen Isolt.

ISOLT

It has been brought here, within the last five minutes.

HOG

It was brought through the windows then: not by the doors.

ISOLT

Bring in our people. Let Bedwyr tell us the news.

[ALL *enter.*]

BEDWYR

God bless you, Queen. I bring you news of the battle.

ISOLT

God bless the bringer of news: may the news be good.

BEDWYR

Good news and bad: things given by God and taken.

Hear all, Queen Isolt and all the Cornish court,
Sir Arthur, the leader, bids me to tell you this:—

[*Enter* TRISTAN *from above.*]

BRANGWEN

O prince, keep away!

TRISTAN

Stand aside, Brangwen. My Isolt, beloved Isolt.
I thought you were dead. O my beloved, sweet saint,
Angel of God, dear darling; O my heart's best.
Come to me. I have been frantic for want of you.

ISOLT

Hold this man, Ranger; help to secure him, Bedwyr.
Hold him away.

[*He is caught.*]

TRISTAN

Isolt, for God's sake, give me
One little word. Loose me, friends, let me speak to her.
Loose me! I'll cut your throats else. Isolt, my Isolt!

ISOLT

Can you come again, after your uncle's mercy?
Could you think I should greet you in my husband's absence?
You are outlaw, sentenced to death: I could have you hanged.

TRISTAN

He told me that you were murdered and buried. O God!

Give me your hands. I will have your hands.
Let me go.

ISOLT

Carry that frantic madman into the court,
Deliver him to the guard as a cast felon,
And let the marshal flog him with fifty stripes
And drag him upon a hurdle out of the bounds.
Remove him.

TRISTAN

Isolt remember; think what I am!

ISOLT

Think, you, of what you are; and of what I am.

BEDWYR

Away with him, as Queen Isolt bids.

TRISTAN

O gods!

[*He is dragged out, struggling and raving.*]

ISOLT

You harboured that creature, Brangwen.

BRANGWEN

Yes. I love lovers
And I pity sufferers; life having taught me so.

ISOLT

And I hate madness and trample it underfoot.

[*Enter* BEDWYR.]

Did you hand that man to the guard?

BEDWYR

As the Queen bade.

[*The others enter.*]

ISOLT

You, take your places; give good heed and be silent.
What news of the war, Sir Bedwyr?

BEDWYR

We fought the heathen
At Badon Hill; we fought all day and all night,
And at dawn we fought them again: twelve times we charged them,
Not seven heathen escaped alive: they are ended.

ISOLT

Thank God, who has given victory to our men.

BEDWYR

Let us also thank the men whose lives bought victory.

ISOLT

Ah! doubtless many most precious have paid the price?

BEDWYR

Many; and one most precious of all to Cornwall.
King Marc lies dead at the thorn tree by the brook,
Killed as we broke them. He being dead, I salute
Isolt, the Queen of Cornwall. God save Queen Isolt!
Our hearts and swords are Queen Isolt's to command.

ISOLT

I thank you for this loyalty to our House.
I pray God help me to govern Cornwall rightly.

BEDWYR [*to the household*].

That Tristan, whom we have flogged out of Tintagel,
Was King Marc's heir, and still may claim to be King.
But we have turned him out for ever and ever,
Understand that. Queen Isolt alone rules Cornwall.
The man who kills that outlaw shall be rewarded.
May we take our leave, Queen?

ISOLT

Yes, dismiss to your tasks.

[BRANGWEN *stays; the rest go.*]

Did that prince talk with vou before he came down?

BRANGWEN

Only to say how loving you made him mad.
Thinking you dead, he has lived upon leaves and grass;
No diet to withstand flogging from marshal's men.

ISOLT

What I have done, I have done. Where is he living?

BRANGWEN

He is not living, but dving. There's a hut on the moor
Where Pixne, the Ranger's girl, leaves comforts for him.
There he will speedily die from grief and shame.

ISOLT

It is no great pain to die, the heart being dead.

BRANGWEN

No, madam, you utter truth: it is no great pain.
May I take your orders, madam?

ISOLT

Orders? For what?

BRANGWEN

For the funeral feast for your royal husband killed.

ISOLT

There will be no funeral feast.

BRANGWEN

For his burial, then.

ISOLT

There will be no burial save what his comrades gave him.

BRANGWEN

Surely his body will be borne from the field
And brought with flowers and lights here to Tintagel,
To be laid in a sacred place with his father's bones.

ISOLT

God made the earth where he lies; he will sleep sweeter
Under the milkwort and the larks of heaven
Than in this charnel of bones and dead Kings' sin.

BRANGWEN

He laid his glove beside you in noble mercy,
Yet you will not lay a flower upon his corpse,
Hacked as it is, in saving you from the heathen.
You could not love this royal man who is dead;
I could, and do, as the noblest, gentlest King
That ever was famed in Britain. Therefore, my Queen,
I at least shall go till I find where my lover lies.
He was my lover for once; thank God therefor.
What worship these hands may render to the dead,
I will give, madam, being more his wife than you.

ISOLT

May your last duties comfort your widowhood.

[BRANGWEN *goes.*]

[ISOLT *comes forward to the front stage: the curtains close behind her.*]

ISOLT

So this one triumphs over me as a lover,
Thinks that she loves if, after sighing in secret,
She lays a daisy upon a dead man's body.
She has never known what it is.
Love is so terrible,
A love like mine. I have killed Tristan, my lover;
Killed him as though with a sword.
I have been perilous to Tristan and Marc.
What have they had from me but fever in the bones?
Marc was dead all the time: no need to have scourged him.

I was the virtuous wife; see where it sank me.
It is ended: nothing can bring it back. I have
This little knife of mother's. Poor mother afar,
Who was thoughtful for me before I thought, and will feel
After I cease to feel. The brook will run down
Over the shingle to sea; and the corncrake call;
And the honeysuckle, up in the glen, drowse sweetness:
And the moon come over the hill: mother will have them,
Not I: I shall not have them. What shall I have?
Some sky for the two wild swans to be wing in wing,
Some holly thicket for the stag and his deer,
Some space in heaven, where I, the comet, will seek
My mate, past withering orbs and moons gone blind,
For centuries to come. I am following, Tristan;
Wait for your cruel killer, a little hour.
You shall be my death as I have been yours, beloved.
We who have flooded like the Severn, will ebb
To the great sea together like tides going out.

[*She moves off.*]

[*No wait.*]

[*The full stage. The forest scene.*]

PIXNE

Why, you are better, sir; you have come to yourself.
Now drink this apple-water: it's sweet and cooling.

TRISTAN

You have been good to me like an angel of God.
But I shall never be better: I'm dying, Pixne.
What did you mean by "come to myself"? Myself;
I had a self once: destiny interfered.
I was a prince once, girl; but I loved a queen.
Before this life I was somewhere linked to her life;
After this life, God knows she will be at my soul,
Either my thirst in hell or my light in heaven.

Isolt the sweet, Isolt the bright,
In you my day, in you my night.
Isolt my love, Isolt my own.

I am fevered and faint. I have loved that lady, Pixne.

PIXNE

Sir, do not think of her: it was that that harmed you.
You must not talk, lest your coughing begin again.

TRISTAN

The coughing is over; like me.

Isolt my hope, Isolt my star,
In you my share of things that are.

I cannot rhyme as I did. Pixne, if you loved me
And I were dying, even if we had quarrelled,
You would come to say good-bye?

PIXNE

You know that I would.
So every woman would.

TRISTAN

Not all. It is hard
For some, when they choose a path, to be thought mistaken.
But something here in my heart speaks of her coming
To say good-bye to her love.

PIXNE

O my prince and master!
Whoever is coming, it is not to say good-bye,
But to heal your cruel wounds and your broken lungs,
And take you to some nice home with fire and wine
And good food fit for your health.

TRISTAN

Look on the road, girl.
Is there anyone on a black horse crossing the moor?

PIXNE

Nobody, sir.

TRISTAN

She would come on the horse, Black Eagle,
Because I gave him to her.

PIXNE

There is no black horse.

TRISTAN

Not yet, perhaps; but look for a brown horse, Pixne:
She would send Brangwen first to say she is coming.
Is Brangwen there, on a brown horse, with a message?

PIXNE

There is no horse at all on the moor, Sir Tristan,
But the carrier's blind white pony, moving away.

TRISTAN

Brangwen was faithful. Brangwen, a Welsh king's daughter,
Enslaved in a raid: a life of hell, which I worsened.
Brangwen, good Brangwen, a brown horse, or Black Eagle.

[*He lapses, muttering.*]

PIXNE

What are you muttering, Prince? Hush! I think he is sleeping.
If he can rest now, he will throw off this cough.
I will creep out while he sleeps, to pray at the cross.

The prayers will help: I dare leave him for so long.
He is so weak, he must sleep, poor lovely man.

[*She goes out.*]

TRISTAN

There was no horse on the moor, no horse at all.
Save a rider with a spare horse drawing nearer.
I shall mount and ride with him and not return.
But there is a horse upon the moor: I hear him.
I will look to see: alas, I am so weak
That I cannot stand, nor see. But on the moorland
A horse is at a gallop heading hither. . . .
It is she . . . yes . . . it is she . . .
But she cannot know my dwelling, she will pass me.
Isolt, I am here! Isolt, Queen Isolt, Isolt.
No, no, no, she has passed: she could not hear me.
What time of year is it? are the harebells come?
It's the end of the year with me, Tristan, the Prince.

Isolt the maid, Isolt the Queen,
Isolt the April, budding green.

Those are Black Eagle's hoofs. Eagle, boy, Eagle!
Yet, it is Eagle, he hears me: Isolt is coming.
It is Isolt coming to see me before I die.

[*The voice of* ISOLT *is heard.*]

Isolt! come to me, Isolt!

ISOLT

Tristan, my Tristan!
O my beloved Tristan, where are you hidden?

TRISTAN

I am here, Isolt: I knew that you would come.
Ah! I shall not see her face: my death is on me.
[ISOLT *enters.*]

ISOLT

O Tristan, my heart's own darling, take me again.

TRISTAN

Isolt my blood, Isolt my breath,
In you my life; in you my death.
[*He dies.*]

ISOLT

He has gone from me for ever from this shell,
This broken body that my cruelty killed.
I will come with you, Tristan; stay but a moment.
We two will journey together whatever ways
Bodiless spirits travel in the heaven
Of being set free. You were more beautiful, Tristan,
Than the young stag tossing tines near the holly thicket.
You were dearer to me than anything else on earth.
Take pity upon me, darling, though I took none.
[*She stabs herself.*]
Tristan, my captain, my love; my only love.
[*She dies.*]
[*Enter* PIXNE, DINAN, BRANGWEN, ARTHUR.]

PIXNE

It is here, sir; they are here. O Sir Tristan; dead!

DINAN

Dead: we're too late: the birds have flown from their cages.

ARTHUR

We will bury them together, here where they lie.
If they have sinned, they have loved with a love exceeding:
Now they are spirits of love, not bodies bleeding.

CURTAIN

## EPILOGUE

DESTINY

Not as men plan, nor as women pray, do things happen.
Unthought of, unseen, from the past, comes the ill without cure;
By the spirit of man and the judgment of God it is shapen;
And its end is our pride in the dust: it is just: it is sure.

THE END

## NOTE

*Stage.* This play was written to be played in two hours and twenty minutes upon a stage without scenery, hung with back cloths. It was written for a theatre with a fore stage, or apron, and a main stage on a somewhat higher level. At the back of, and above, the main stage, there is a gallery or balcony, approached by stairs on each side.

Some of the scenes of the play are designed for action on the apron, when the curtain between the two stages is drawn.

*Costume.* Should be that of Romanised Britons. Arthur should wear golden Roman armour with the scarlet cloak of a general. All the costumes, without exception, should be of bright and vivid colours: that of Kolbein should be the most barbaric and the gayest.

*Decorations.* The shields of King Marc's household bore a golden horse upon a blue field. The men of his household wore white satin scarves with black borders. His banners were white, with black points.

*The ages of the characters:—*

TRISTAN and ISOLT—About twenty years.

MARC—About twenty-nine years.

THURID, ARTHUR, and KOLBEIN—About forty-five years.

DINAN, KAI, and BEDWYR—About fifty-five years.

HOG and SOWKIN—About sixty years.

TRISTAN, MARC, KOLBEIN, and ARTHUR should be clean-shaven.

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